THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE

50c
OCTOBER
PDC

Those two all-American agents you love the most are at it again in their hottest adventure yet!

THE MIND-SWEEPER AFFAIR

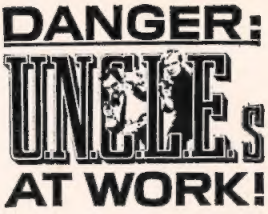
A New **NAPOLEON SOLO** and **ILLYA KURYAKIN** Novel by
ROBERT HART DAVIS

PIGMY ISLAND

Another "Department of Lost Stories" Masterpiece
by **EDMOND HAMILTON**

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE

TWO YEARS – 24 ISSUES – FOR ONLY $8



THINK OF IT—twenty-four (24) suspense U.N.C.L.E. novels will come your way. The most action-packed, popular espionage-adventure entertainment being offered today. And we make the above unusual offer to our readers because we want to assure them of receiving *The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Magazine* every month—twelve full quotas for the best reading enjoyment a year—for two years in a row! Subscribe NOW—and you won't have to search through crowded newsstands. Remember—the colorfully illustrated *The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Magazine* will come to you promptly every thirty days with an entirely new full length novel featuring the most remarkable popular fiction and T.V. spy characters in existence today!

DON'T FORGET—these great novels, headlining the famous U.N.C.L.E. lead characters, Napoleon Solo, Illya Kuryakin and Alexander Waverly, will be espionage-adventure reading standouts, just as MGM-ARENA's dynamic television series has been for so many years.

FILL YOUR ORDER *in NOW! Subscribe for your friends—you'll be giving a thrilling present at the biggest and best bargain of your crime-reading life—and theirs! Two years—24 issues—yours for only $8.00. In United States currency, please. Add additional dollar ($1.00) for Canada, Mexico, Pan American and all foreign countries.*

LEO MARGULIES CORP.
56 West 45th Street, New York, New York 10036

Kindly enter my subscription to **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE** for two years (24 issues) @ $8.00. Add $1.00 for foreign postage.

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print **October—220**

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE

NAPOLEON SOLO · ILLYA KURYAKIN

OCTOBER, 1967 VOL. 4, NO. 3

NEW FULL LENGTH U.N.C.L.E. NOVEL

THE MIND-SWEEPER AFFAIR

by ROBERT HART DAVIS

© 1967, by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc.

It was impossible, this thing that menaced mankind. Solo and Illya's every instinct told them that such a monster could not be—and yet it was there before them! Face with them, if you dare, the incredible Thing that stripped men's minds of their inmost secrets—and then destroyed them!

. . . . . 2 to 67

DEPARTMENT OF LOST STORIES

PIGMY ISLAND
EDMOND HAMILTON 98

NEW SHORT STORIES

DIMENSION OF MIND
ROBERT EDMOND ALTER 68
MR. WONG DISAGREES
DAN ROSS 82
THE OLD PRO
LOUIS RILEY 90
THE WEEKEND WAS MURDER
STEVE APRIL 122
THE SLEEPER
SHEILA LYNDS 128
RENDEZVOUS
DANIEL FRENCH 143

United Network Command for Law and Enforcement

LEO MARGULIES
Publisher

CYLVIA KLEINMAN
Editorial Director

HOLMES TAYLOR
Associate Editor

CANDY DAVIS
Subscriptions

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE. Vol. 4, No. 3. October, 1967. Single copies 50¢. Subscriptions $6.00 for one year in the United States and Possessions; elsewhere $7.00 (in U.S. funds) for one year. Published monthly by Leo Margulies Corp., 56 West 45th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. © 1967, by Leo Margulies Corp. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. Printed in the United States of America.

THE MIND-SWEEPER AFFAIR

THE NEW COMPLETE "U.N.C.L.E." NOVEL

It was a house of madness, peopled by men who knew Evil not wisely but too well. Somewhere inside there Solo and Illya must find and destroy a devil's monster that lay bare men's very souls—before it destroyed them!

by ROBERT HART DAVIS

ACT I—TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM

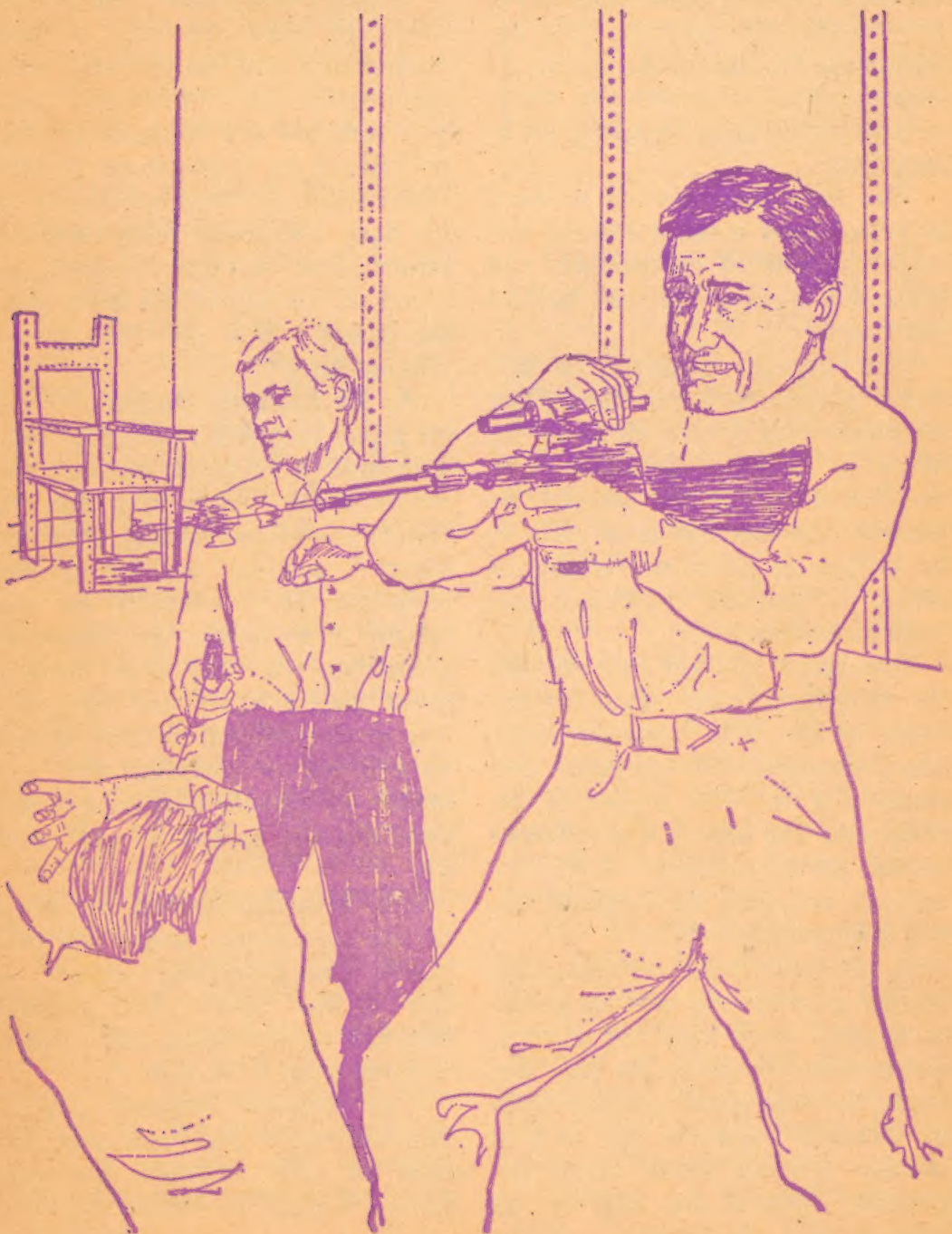
MANAGUA is the capital of Caragua. The war department building is in the center of the city. On a night in May, at about eight o'clock in the evening, a sergeant of the national army walked quietly along the corridors until he came to an office marked: *Major General L. G. Dachado.*

The sergeant stopped for a moment in front of the door, looked up and down the corridor, then leaned his ear against the closed door. Satisfied, he walked on to the next door, which was plain and unmarked. Again checking to see if he was alone, he produced a key, opened the unmarked door,

© 1967, by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc.

HEADLINING

NAPOLEON SOLO and ILLYA KURYAKIN



and stepped inside, shutting the door quickly behind him.

The room the sergeant stood in was dark. Windowless, it had no lights on. The sergeant waited for a moment until his eyes were accustomed to the dark. Then he stepped quickly across the room to a wall of shelves that held office supplies.

The sergeant removed a stack of paper, took a small contact microphone out of his pocket, and pressed it against the wall behind shelves.

The sergeant remained in that listening position for an hour. The telephone rang several times in the office of General Dachado. The sergeant listened, but showed no interest. As the first hour passed, he shifted his position a couple of times, lit another cigarette, and went on listening.

Ten more minutes passed, and the telephone rang again in the other office. The sergeant came alert, dropped his cigarette and stamped it out. The ringing of the telephone this time had a different sound, as if muffled. A drawer opened, and then the sergeant began to listen intently.

A moment later the sergeant put his microphone into his pocket, stepped away from the shelves, and moved silently to the door between the storeroom and the office of General Dachado. He took a strange looking pistol from his pocket, changed the clip in its hand grip for another clip he took from his pocket, and opened the door soundlessly. He peered through the opening.

A tall, skinny man with a long drooping mustache and a dark complexion was at the desk with his back to the storeroom door. The sergeant saw General Dachado talking on a telephone he had taken from the bottom drawer of his desk. Obviously a special telephone, since two other instruments stood on the top of the desk. And the general was not talking—he was listening.

As he listened, Dachado wrote on a pad of paper in front of him. The hidden sergeant watched the whole scene. There was no one else in the office. At last Dachado stopped writing, nodded to the telephone as if whoever he was talking to could see him, muttered something that was more than a grunt than a word, and hung up. The general looked at what he had written for a moment, then replaced the private telephone in the desk drawer, locked it, and stood up.

The sergeant opened the door of the storeroom, raised his odd pistol, and something seemed to spit in the room. The general clutched at his neck, half-turned, and collapsed to the floor.

The sergeant stepped quickly into the room. He bent over and took the piece of paper from the general's hand. It was the message

Dachado had written down while listening to the telephone. The sergeant stood above the fallen man and read the paper. The only sound in the room was Dachado's labored and shallow breathing under the influence of the drugged pellet the sergeant had shot him with.

Nothing moved as the sergeant read the paper carefully.

Then the outer door of Dachado's office burst open.

A masked man in civilian clothes jumped into the room. There was a pistol in his hand. The attacker shot the sergeant. There was no sound, just a short, gutteral bark like a sharp cough.

The sergeant was knocked backwards.

The attacker jumped in toward the piece of paper that the sergeant had dropped. For an instant his silenced pistol was aimed away from the crumpled man.

With a burst of strength, the wounded sergeant threw himself on his attacker. The sergeant knocked his attacker down and staggered out the open door into the corridor.

On the floor of the office the attacker lay stunned for a moment. Then he jumped up and was about to go after the sergeant when he stopped, turned, and picked up the paper again. He read it quickly but carefully, dropped it again, and went out the open door.

The complete novels depicting the amazing adventures of Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin and the rest of the famous cast of characters making up the great organization known as United Network Command for Law and Enforcement—are especially written, entirely brand-new and inspired by the tremendously exciting MGM-ARENA popular television series—"THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E."

The sergeant staggered on along the dim corridors of the silent building. Once he stopped, leaned against the wall, and looked back at the trail of blood. He shook his head. Then he took off his jacket and pressed it against the ugly wound in his chest. He held the jacket tight against the wound and staggered on.

He grew weaker as he went, but he no longer left a trail of blood. He reached, at last, a cross corridor at the far end of the building. He turned left and came to another unmarked door. He opened it. A small closet was behind the door. He went in, closed the door, and sat among brooms and mops in the dark.

The sergeant took a pencil from his pocket. His movements were slow, painful. At last he had the pencil in his hand, a tiny thread sticking up from the top of the pencil like the antenna of some insect. The sergeant bent his face close to the pencil.

"Control . . . local. Control . . . local . . . come in. This is Agent

Forty-Four, come in . . . Agent Forty-Four . . ."

Another voice, soft and faint, was in the closet.

"Control local. Report Agent Forty-Four. This is control local."

"Agent . . . Forty-Four," the sergeant said, his breath coming in gasps. "June seventeenth. Repeat, June seventeenth. Dachado had a call . . . private telephone . . . full details of time and place . . . June seventeenth was the date of . . ."

The door of the closet burst open. The sergeant made a feeble effort to raise his pistol.

Framed in the open door the masked attacker shot twice.

The sergeant lay dead among the brooms and mops.

The masked attacker ground the pencil-radio beneath his foot and turned away without a glance at his victim.

The building became silent again.

TWO

IN THE COMPLEX of closely guarded rooms and corridors behind and above Del Floria's Tailoring Shop on the East Side of New York near the United Nations that was the headquarters of *The United Network for Law and Enforcement,* the female assistant to the Chief of Communications Section listened to the message coming in from far to the south. She spun dials and the message, picked up by the concealed antenna in the billboard on top of the building, came quick and urgent.

When her radio finally went silent, she touched a button on the console. Moments later a door opened by itself and a pair of young men stepped into the room. They looked like college boys. They were neat, well-groomed and young. But the pistols in their hands indicated that they were not college boys.

"Urgent. To Mr. Waverly direct," the communications girl said.

The two men nodded. One took the message. The other stood to one side with his pistol ready. The message was in a sealed envelope. Neither of the young men even glanced at the envelope. They acted as if they were aware of being watched constantly. They *were* being watched—this was how young men who wanted to be U.N.C.L.E. agents started: carrying important data between departments inside U.N.C.L.E. headquarters. Messengers and the lowest level of internal security.

The two young men walked from the communications room and along a bright grey corridor that had no visible lights, no windows, and rows of doors without locks or knobs. They walked single file, even inside their own security, alert, pistols ready. It was

this unceasing vigilance that, in the last analysis, accounted for the efficiency of U.N.C.L.E. Never relax your guard or your brain, not even in your own headquarters—anyone could be a spy, and the enemy was resourceful.

The two young men waited before an unmarked door at the extreme end of a corridor. Unseen cameras scanned them in a matter of seconds. Electronic sensors analyzed them, smelled them, and approved them. The door slid open and the two men entered a small and simple office. An alert young woman looked at them.

"Priority One, Top Security message for Section I," one of the young men said.

"I'll take it for Mr. Waverly. He—" the young woman began.

"No," the young man said. "The message must be delivered into the hands of Section I members only."

The woman smiled, pressed a button, waited. Another door opened behind her. A man stepped through. A man who looked like nothing but an aristocratic bloodhound wearing sloppy tweeds, smoking an unlighted pipe, and who had flat, innocent eyes and shaggy but neat hair. Unsmiling, the man raised a bushy grey eyebrow and spoke quietly in a clipped, slow, almost bumbling voice.

"Yes, gentlemen?"

The young man with the mes-

sage handed it to the man. Alexander Waverly, Section-I member of U.N.C.L.E. and Chief of all operations in the Western Hemisphere, took the message. The two young men left without a word. Waverly opened the envelope. Then his heavy eyebrows frowned, and he turned and walked back into his inner office.

The door slid shut behind him. He stood for a moment in the spartan office with its windows overlooking the city, and its compact electronic complex that kept him in touch with each part of his headquarters and most of the world operations. Then he sighed heavily and went to his desk. He shook his grey head, and looked at the two men who sat at a round table watching him.

"Colonel Forsyte," Waverly said.

"There's no doubt?" the smaller of the two men said. His shock of blond hair rested like a halo above quick, bright eyes and a Slavic

face. His sensitive mouth framed his words in a clipped British accent. "The colonel is a man with almost a perfect record."

"An absolutely perfect record," the taller of the two who sat at the table said. A slender man of medium height, he looked like a successful junior executive who had had a slightly too easy youth. Which was a complete fraud. Behind the faintly callow exterior was the mind of a trained agent and the skill and muscles of a commando.

"I've checked him out," the taller man, Napoleon Solo, went on. "Not a hint of treason. Not even the chance, really."

"A sleeper, perhaps, Napoleon?" the smaller man, Illya Kuryakin, said.

"How?" Solo said. The Chief Enforcement Agent of U.N.C.L.E.'s Section-II narrowed his usually humorous eyes. "His background is absolutely known all the way back, and he's no fake."

"Private troubles?" Illya said.

"The man's almost a monk, my suspicious Russian," Solo said.

Waverly watched his two best agents. He said nothing, but let them talk. At last he coughed, began to search in his pockets for a match with which to light his pipe.

"Mr. Solo is quite correct. There is no hint that Colonel Forsyte is a spy or traitor," Waverly said quietly, his fingers still searching for a match. "Nevertheless, Colonel Forsyte is the man. As we all know, gentlemen, the test was fool-proof. Of the five men, only Forsyte was given the date of June seventeenth, and that is the date our man in Anagua has just reported."

Waverly found a match and lit his pipe. Solo and Illya were silent. At last Illya Kuryakin spoke.

"So far data on five secret documents have somehow leaked from the defense department," the small Russian said slowly. "In London and Ottawa, similar secrets have been leaked. In all cases the data was known only to the most trusted personnel. Not a hint of treason or espionage has been found against any of the men involved in any case. No single man was in possession of all the secrets. Counter-espionage has found no suspicious actions. Yet the data is leaking."

"Yes," Waverly said, sucking on his pipe. Smoke curled to the ceiling. "Which is why we set up this test, as we all know. The date of the Organization of American States meeting to consider Communist infiltration of the Caraguan army was something we knew General Dachado would want to know. That fact would be known to anyone stealing defense department secrets.

"Each of the five men was given a different date. As you know, each of the five had been present at at least two other meetings

where information leaked. All are career men with perfect records. We hoped that Dachado would not get the data. But he has, gentlemen, and the date was June seventeenth—the date we gave Colonel Forsyte."

Illya's deep eyes frowned. "I followed Forsyte myself. He did nothing in any way suspicious. His normal routine. He did not talk to a single stranger. In fact, he talked to no one unusual in the day since he had the data."

"Did you ever lose him?" Solo said.

"I never lose a man I'm following, Napoleon," Illya said.

"Then we missed something," Solo said. "Or you did. He must have passed the data to someone else. You can't leak data into thin air and have it get to Anagua."

Illya nodded. "I agree. He must have some transfer set-up so good I failed to see it."

Waverly blew smoke. "Perhaps, Mr. Kuryakin. That is a definite possibility. However, there is something about all this I find disturbing. Something decidedly odd, and that makes me definitely uneasy. Colonel Forsyte is not a spy. I stake my career on that."

"One can't always know what pressures will change a man," Illya said quietly.

"Of course not; I quite agree," Waverly said. "Still, I do not like it. Forsyte has far more important data in his possession. Really vital data that has not been leaked. He has had such data for many, many years and it has never leaked. Now, suddenly, the secrets are slipping out as if on wings."

"And not just here," Solo pointed out.

"No, not just here," Waverly said. The Section-I Chief frowned under his bushy brows. "Have you noticed one strange aspect, though? The data that has leaked has no pattern. It is rather random information. That is true in the reports from London and Ottawa. Some is imporatnt, some trivial, relatively speaking."

"And it leaked consecutively, not at the same time," Solo pointed out. "First London, then Ottawa, now here."

"Precisely," Waverly agreed. "Once the leaking began in Ottawa, it ceased in London. Once it started here, it ceased in Ottawa."

"As if whoever is getting the data is working alone, and moved from London to Ottawa to New York," Illya said. "Some big and clever free-lance spy?"

"It has the pattern," Waverly agreed. "Gentlemen, what do we do?"

"Increase our observation of Forsyte," Solo said. "One thing I'm sure of is that you can't transmit data without a contact with someone else. And whoever it is, he's probably still in New York."

"I'm not so sure, Mr. Solo," Waverly said. "I'm afraid our report from Anagua had some bad news. Agent Forty-Four was killed while he was transmitting his message. His body was found in the war department building. Dachado is keeping it quiet, but our information says that he was not killed by Dachado or his men. Our people think there is clear evidence of some third force being involved."

"The spies?" Solo said.

"It seems the logical conclusion. Except for the fact that Dachado took the information on the telephone. Agent Forty-Four reported that much. It seems odd that the spies would make the report by telephone, and then appear moments later to kill Agent Forty-Four."

There was a silence.

"Someone else trying to move in?" Solo said.

"Again, it has the sound," Waverly said. "But we can't be sure. We must be sure. We must know who is getting and transmitting the data—and how."

"Before a third party finds out," Illya said.

"Yes, that particularly," Waverly said. "I think you both had better start watching Colonel Walter Forsyte very closely. Find out how a man can transmit secret data through thin air."

The two agents looked at each other.

THREE

COLONEL WALTER FORSYTE left his house in suburban Manhasset just before eight o'clock the next morning. He stepped into his car, and drove alone directly to the city. He did not notice the blue Mercedes sports car that followed him. Nor did he notice the small man in black on a motorcycle who rode most of the way just in front of him.

Illya Kuryakin, on the motorcycle, and Napoleon Solo, in the Mercedes, worked as the well-oiled team they were, keeping in constant verbal contact with their small radios no one could tell they were using. Illya, on the motorcycle, never took his eyes off the road ahead, or the mirror that showed Forsyte's car behind, as he talked.

"He hasn't even noticed us, Napoleon."

In the Mercedes, Solo had the best view of the colonel up ahead in his car.

"No. He acts like a man who never heard of being followed," Solo said.

Illya evaded a bump in the parkway. "Perhaps he hasn't ever thought about it, Napoleon. Or he's a fine actor."

Solo speeded up to pass a truck and keep Forsyte within his sight. "Or he's so confident of his methods he doesn't care if anyone watches him."

"No method of passing information can be that good," Illya said with Forsyte clear in his rear mirror. The colonel was driving easily, smiling and apparently whistling to himself.

"Hypnosis?" Solo said from the Mercedes.

"How?" Illya said from the motorcycle. "We've been watching him since he had the information. Or you have. Was he ever out of your sight long enough to be hypnotized?"

"No," Solo said flatly, as he watched the back of Forsyte's head in the car in front of him.

The traffic became thick as they approached the city, and the two men stopped talking to concentrate on following their man. Forsyte did not seem in any way suspicious. They plunged into the white echoing void of the Midtown Tunnel and emerged into Manhattan.

Forsyte turned north to his office in the building of the United States Mission to The United Nations. There the colonel worked as second-in-command of a special global psychological warfare team assigned to close cooperation with the State Department. Forsyte parked and entered the building and rode up in the elevator without noticing the lieutenant who was behind him and rode up in the elevator with him.

Solo, disguised as the lieutenant, faced front and gave no indication that he was interested in Forsyte. But he followed the colonel out of the elevator, to his office, and took up a previously prepared position at a desk in Forsyte's outer office where he could watch everyone who came or went.

By the rear entrance, unseen by anyone, Illya made his way up to the floor of Forsyte's office, and into a prepared closet from the hallway where a small peephole, disguised on the other side, made it possible for him to observe the man. A planted mike made the colonel's words part of the closet.

Nothing happened.

The colonel spoke to no one suspicious. No one unknown came to his office. Nothing was passed in silence or by word. No meaningful looks were exchanged in front of the eyes of Illya hidden in the closet. No letters were mailed. No signals were given either in the office or out the windows, by Forsyte or anyone else.

The colonel did not leave his office for lunch.

The afternoon was no more eventful, but it was short. Colonel Forsyte left his office for the day at three o'clock. Illya ran down from the closet to the parking area. Solo casually left the office just behind the colonel. He followed the colonel to the parking lot and saw Illya working over his motorcycle.

Solo saw something else.

Not far from Illya, to the left of

the colonel's car, a tall man in a grey suit, his face turned away, was working to pile boxes into the front seat of his car—or pretending to. Because the man was actually watching the side mirror of the car. And the angle of the mirror seemed aimed at Forsyte's car!

To the right of the colonel's car a smaller man, wide and powerful, was seated on the hood of his car reading a newspaper. From time to time this man looked at his watch, and then away toward the entrance, as if he were waiting for his wife. But Solo did not think the man was waiting for anything, or anyone, except Colonel Walter Forsyte.

The colonel walked to his car.

No one made a move.

The entire parking area seemed momentarily frozen into a silent paralysis.

Then Forsyte took a bundle of clothes from the rear seat of his car and turned to walk away. The colonel walked casually and easily, carrying the clothes and whistling softly to himself like a man without a care in the world and the prospect of a pleasant afternoon in front of him. He reached the halfway point to the exit before anyone moved.

Then the short, wide man jumped easily down from his car and sauntered off in the same direction as the colonel. There were many people in the parking area, but Solo had little doubt that the wide man was following the colonel. Solo glanced briefly in the general direction of Illya. The small, blond Russian touched his left ear and rubbed his hands together.

Plan One. Solo would continue with the original job, and Illya would assume the new job. In this situation that meant that Solo would follow Forsyte and Illya would follow the new men who seemed so interested in Forsyte. Solo walked out of the parking area without another glance at Illya.

Illya continued to work on his motorcycle. The tall man in the grey suit suddenly finished piling the boxes into his car, got into the car and drove out. Illya mounted the motorcycle and went off after the tall man.

Solo picked up the colonel and the muscular man a block from the colonel's office building. They were both walking west, Forsyte a half a block in front, carrying his clothes. Solo did not like how far behind he was, and he didn't want the wide man to know that he was following, so he speeded up and passed the wide man as if he had no interest in him.

The colonel turned into a dry cleaner's shop. Solo followed him in without a pause.

In the parking area Illya followed the tall man in the car out of the area and left toward Third Avenue. The man drove slowly,

obviously working as a team with the wide man on foot. On Third Avenue the tall man's car turned north and double parked. The wide man was standing in front of a cleaner's shop. Illya drove on past and pulled into the curb a block ahead where he could keep his eye on the car of the tall man in front of him.

Inside the dry cleaner's, Solo got into a mild argument about his clothes—he claimed that he had forgotten his ticket and gave a phony name. While the counterman was swearing and looking through racks of clothes in the rear, Solo watched Forsyte and listened. As far as he could tell Forsyte passed no messages, and received none. The colonel was concerned only with the correct way to press his uniform.

An instant before it was obvious that the colonel was about to leave, Solo told the counterman to forget his cleaning; he'd find his ticket and be back. He walked out just in front of the colonel, hesitating on the sidewalk a split second while he sensed which way the colonel would turn. He turned first and walked north.

The colonel came along behind him, and the wide man came after the colonel. The procession went on for a block. Then Solo went into a stationery store and bought a bar of candy. He came out and was now last in line. The parade continued until Solo suddenly

knew where the colonel was going.

He had followed the colonel the day before, and at this exact hour he had been in the exact spot. The colonel was going to his health club. The club was one block away, to the right down a cross street, on the second floor of an old building that backed on an alley. Solo passed both the wide

man and the colonel and was the first one up the stairs to the health club.

Illya, on his motorcycle, observed the parade up Third Avenue. He saw the car of the tall man take up its position following the three walking men. Illya frowned. On his motorcycle he was too conspicuous. Yet he had to keep watch on the two men, who were now definitely tailing Forsyte. He had no choice.

On the motorcycle he moved along behind the slow moving car of the tall man. His brain was working hard. Who were they, the two men following Forsyte? If they were spies who got the secret data from Forsyte, why were they following the colonel? It made no sense.

Then Illya had no more time for thinking. The car ahead turned into a cross street. Illya followed. Solo, Forsyte, and the wide man had vanished. He saw the sign of the health club. He remembered Solo's report of the colonel's activities, and guessed that the three men had gone into the health club.

The car ahead passed the entrance to the club and turned into an alley that ran beside the building. Illya followed to the alley, dismounted, parked his motorcycle, and entered the alley warily.

At the rear door of the building two men stepped out to meet the tall man who had been driving the car. Illya Kuryakin crept closer to hear them.

FOUR

NAKED, NAPOLEON SOLO wrapped a towel around his hips in the locker room of the health club, and walked toward the showers. Forsyte was already in the shower. The wide man, a mass of muscles in his towel, was under a sun lamp from where he had a clear view of the showers.

Solo had watched Forsyte register and get his basket of athletic and swim clothes. The colonel had spoken to no one, except to say hello, and had passed nothing. In the locker room Forsyte nodded to various men, but said nothing, and hummed happily as if the health club was a part of his life he specially enjoyed. Now the colonel sang in the shower and Solo joined him.

Forsyte looked at him for the first time as if he recognized him. Solo smiled, and Forsyte smiled back. The colonel returned to his shower, singing. He clearly had decided that Solo was just some member he knew on sight, or some junior from his office on the staff of some other colonel. Forsyte was not a suspicious man.

Solo watched the colonel closely. But no one approached him; he did nothing that looked like he was transmitting any information in the shower, and he had nothing

on him to pass. When Forsyte finished his shower, he toweled and went toward the steam and hot rooms. Solo followed, suddenly alert—the steam room was a mass of swirling vapor. An easy place to sit almost completely hidden and pass information.

But Forsyte did not go into the steam room. He entered the hot room instead. Solo followed, and so did the wide, muscular man. In the hot room the light was bright, the air was dry and oven hot, and naked men lay all around on deck chairs. From time to time an attendant brought glasses of water. The men on the chairs sweated in rivers.

Forsyte took the only empty chair in the hot room. Solo and the muscular man looked around. As if on a signal, three of the men stood up and walked out, leaving chairs for Solo and the wide man. Solo kept one eye on Forsyte, and one on the muscular man. So far, the unknown man who was also interested in Forsyte had shown no interest in Solo.

Solo lay in the deck chair and pretended to sleep. But he watched Forsyte like a hawk from behind his half-closed eyes. The muscular man was also apparently asleep. But Forsyte wasn't asleep. The colonel read a newspaper and drank water and the sweat poured off him. Forsyte seemed to be enjoying the sweating. Every now and then he rubbed himself vigorously with a towel and continued his reading.

No one talked to Forsyte.

Nothing seemed to happen. Solo was beginning to think that whatever method Forsyte used it was very good.

Then he heard the faint sound.

It was almost imperceptible. One sound among many that came from all parts of the health club. No one else seemed to notice. A faint hum, low and outside the hot room. Solo listened to it, tried to locate its location. After a time he decided that it was coming from above—from the ceiling of the hot room, or from the floor above the health club. Probably nothing . . .

He stopped in mid-thought. His half-hidden eyes stared at Forsyte.

The colonel was suddenly acting strangely.

Solo watched. Forsyte had not rubbed himself in some time. The towel lay neglected on the floor. The colonel's right arm hung down, almost limp. He still held the paper, but his eyes seemed to be having trouble reading the words. Forsyte blinked a few times, shook his head as if to clear it.

Solo stared from the slits of his eyes. Forsyte rubbed his eyes, and then rubbed his forehead. The newspaper fell from his left hand and lay forgotten on his lap. Forsyte shook his head again, like

a man fighting sleep. Then the colonel suddenly reached up, slowly, with both hands and pressed his temples as if in pain.

The hands, the arms, of the colonel moved like a man whose muscles had just failed. Slowly, without strength. Forsyte pressed his temples, shook his head like a sleepwalker, and then his arms dropped and his eyes closed. He lay in the chair like a man asleep.

But it was like a drugged sleep, uneasy, almost painful and too deep. His arms hung down at his sides; his breathing became heavy, labored. Solo watched him, and then heard, again, the faint humming sound that seemed to come from the ceiling of the room.

He suddenly remembered the way Forsyte had been forced to take the deck chair—it had been the only chair vacant when the colonel entered. No one else in the hot room was reacting in the manner of the colonel.

Solo looked up at the ceiling. The humming sound continued.

Solo stood up and left the hot room.

He wrapped the towel around his waist and looked back once. Forsyte still lay there like a drugged man. The muscular man was staring at Forsyte, but the man had not moved.

Solo looked around and saw a door marked for a fire exit. He opened the door when he was unobserved. Stairs led upward.

FIVE

IN THE ALLEY Illya Kuryakin crouched in the shadowed afternoon behind a rank of garbage cans. At this hour of the afternoon no sun came into the alley, and the area was in dark shadow. The three men still talked near the rear door to the building.

Illya moved silently closer. The men did not notice.

"We've watched him all day, and I'm damned if he could have passed anything," the tall man said.

"Is Gregor still with him?" one of the other men said.

"Yes. In the health club. He contacted me."

"The Boss says it's certain that Forsyte passed the info on to Dachado. We've got to find out how."

"We'll find out," the tall man said.

"Why don't we just grab him and get it out of him?"

"Let the Boss do the thinking."

"Hell, we'd get what we wanted in five minutes with some of the stuff we've got."

"Sure," the tall man said, "but what if Forsyte doesn't know anything? What if he just passes the info to someone he doesn't know, or just leaves it at a drop? As soon as we grabbed Forsyte they'd know about it, and maybe we never catch up with who he gives the stuff to."

"I never thought of that," the other man said.

"That's why you're not Boss and never will be," the tall man said.

"The Boss takes his orders."

"Sure he does, and up top they know more than we do. We do our job and get paid. Right? We get paid pretty well."

"It beats working," the other man agreed.

"Do we just wait here?" the one who had not spoken said suddenly.

"For a signal from Gregor. Maybe Forsyte ducks out the back. Who knows?" the tall man said.

"Or the front. I better check with Ord out front to be sure he's watching," the man said.

Starting to walk as he talked, the man came directly toward Illya. Despite the shadows it was still daylight. There was no way for Illya to not be seen. He drew his U.N.C.L.E. Special, fired a sleep pellet at the man, and ran for the mouth of the alley.

The man he had shot took another step, opened his mouth, and pitched forward, unconscious. The other two saw Illya. But they had to draw their guns and he had almost reached the mouth of the alley when two shots whistled past him.

Two men suddenly appeared in the alley mouth. They had guns.

Illya skidded to a halt.

The two men came toward him. Behind him he heard the other two men. The blond Russian looked around quickly. There was an open window just to his right in another building. He ran and jumped for it. He was sure they would not shoot until they knew who he was.

His fingers closed on the window sill and he hauled himself up to the sill. He raised his knee to climb inside.

Something stung his neck.

The last he knew his fingers were slipping and then there was only falling through space.

SIX

WRAPPED IN THE towel, Napoleon Solo moved along a dark hallway on the floor above the health club.

The rooms up here were all dark, and nothing seemed to move. The hall stretched silent and dim. Solo felt very naked and exposed in his towel in the dark hall, but downstairs he would have been conspicuous in clothes. He moved on along the hall.

He heard voices and someone coming in the distance where the hallway ended. There was a closet near. He opened the door and slid inside, leaving the door ajar a crack.

The voices came closer, and turned into the narrow corridor outside the closet.

"I tell you there was a disturbance in the alley."

"And I don't like the look of that muscular fellow in the hot room. He's never been here before."

"We better finish with Forsyte fast."

The voices and footsteps almost reached the closet door, but turned sharply right before they came abreast. Solo saw the two men, both wearing the white uniforms of health club attendants. They went through a door in the opposite wall and failed to close it. Solo heard the humming sound, louder now and closer. He slipped out of the closet and glided up to the half open door.

He looked in and saw a macabre scene like the scenes he remembered from the horror movies of his childhood.

The room was totally bare except for two more men, four in all, and a grotesque-looking machine. The four men all wore health club white uniforms. The machine wore nothing but a sense of cold efficiency.

It was a large machine that looked like a computer on wheels. A square section, covered with dials and buttons and flashing lights, was mounted on legs. Tape reels turned on its face. Beneath it, where it stood in the center of the room, a long tubelike shape protruded down like a searchlight and entered a hole in the floor.

The humming noise came from the machine. The four men all worked around the machine, touching dials, observing gauges, making adjustments. They looked like the fanatic priests of some evil god. They were so intent on their work that they did not notice Solo standing in the open door.

Solo had little doubt that this machine was aimed down into the hot room and at Colonel Forsyte.

"Finish it off," one of the men snapped.

"Quiet," another man said.

This last man spoke softly, almost gently, and yet there was a hard commanding sound to his voice. When he spoke the others all looked at him. Solo had no doubt that he was the leader. In the flashing lights of the machine Napoleon Solo saw his face. It was a pleasant face: tanned, healthy, with a sharp nose and bright, intelligent dark eyes. His hands were long and slender as they worked the dials of the macabre instrument. His hair was grey and thick, like the shock of hair of some professor. He was a small, slender man.

"To withdraw the instrument abruptly could kill Forsyte," this leader said quietly. "It must be shut down slowly. Would you care to leave a body here? Or a madman? I have no wish to be traced through Forsyte and a hasty mistake. We are almost ready for the full development."

"Sure, Chief," one of the other men said.

The other two nodded. The slender man continued to work his dials like a man caressing a woman he loves. He seemed to talk to himself, almost crooning, as he worked. "The key to the sweeper is that it leaves no trace and no memory of its use, remember that. Isn't that so, little beauty? You touch the mind and the mind whispers to you and no one knows. That is your talent, isn't it, little one? No one can ever know you have been at work."

The slender, grey-haired man laughed softly. It was a laugh with an edge of insanity. The kind of insanity a brilliant mind can have when something has given it a small, sudden twist, and left all else normal.

"Professor—" one of the other men began to say.

The slender leader snapped. "Very well! I understand the need for speed. I am nearly finished. Another few minutes. I have begun the withdrawal. If you are so worried, check with Drago below and hasten the departure of our patrons."

One of the men turned and started for the door. Solo leaped back just in time and slid again into the closet. The man came past the closet—and his footsteps stopped. Solo looked around the closet. There was a large laundry hamper filled with soiled towels and

white uniforms. He climbed inside quickly and covered himself.

He heard the door to the closet open. He held a deep breath so that he would make no sound and the towels would not move to his breathing. He heard someone poking around in the closet. Then the man went away and the closet door closed.

There was a sharp click.

Solo raised his head from among the towels. The closet was pitch dark now. He climbed out of the towels and went to the door. It was locked and there was no lock inside. The man who had come in had sprung the lock and closed the door, and it operated only from outside. Solo listened at the door.

He heard low voices and movement. He could not break out while anyone was there. He would be a sitting duck—naked as a baby and without weapons. All he had was his ring. He bent close over the ring and touched a tiny button.

"Bubba, this is Sonny. Mayday.

Come in Bubba. Mayday, Code Two, come in Bubba. Sonny calling Bubba."

Silence.

Solo stared at his ring in the dark. He tried again. "Bubba come in. Sonny to Bubba. Mayday."

Silence that seemed to hang in the dark air of the closet. Solo rubbed his chin. He could use the audible signal—but what if Illya were hiding? He tried once more.

There was no answer. Solo touched the ring again.

"Control Central, Sonny reporting. Come in Control Central."

It was the voice of Waverly himself that answered.

"Where are you, Mr. Solo? Your signal indicates you are very close to Headquarters."

"Close, but too far," Solo said drily. "I'm about five blocks away, locked in a closet."

"Really, Mr. Solo, this is no time for childishness," Waverly's slow, clipped voice said.

Solo smiled. The calm, matter-of-fact voice of Waverly had saved many an agent from panic and death. The voice was only a cover. Waverly was serious and concerned about all his agents.

"Sorry, sir," Solo whispered. "But I can't raise Illya, and I am locked in a closet, and I think I have something."

"We will try to contact Mr. Kuryakin," Waverly's voice said. "What do you have?"

"A machine. It's in the health club," and Napoleon Solo described what he had seen. "It looks like this machine somehow gets the data from Forsyte, or anyone else."

There was a silence. Then Waverly's voice came again almost as calm as ever—but not quite.

"Mr. Solo, you must get closer to that machine. If possible get it, if not destroy it. We—we have heard vague rumors of such a machine for many years. It was reported during the Korean conflict as something being worked on by a mysterious ex-Nazi scientist. Until now, it was only an impossible rumor. If—"

Waverly left the sentence hanging. In the closet Solo nodded as if Waverly could see him. Perhaps Waverly could.

"It is vital, Mr. Solo, you understand? Such a machine in the wrong hands?"

"I understand, sir. But I can't get out of this closet until the place is deserted. I'd be caught in seconds. Meanwhile, Forsyte and the people here can walk away. If Illya is outside, he should watch."

There was another tense silence. Then—

"We cannot raise Mr. Kuryakin either. I am sending men to look for him and watch your building. They will await your signal before they enter the building."

Solo felt cold. Where was Illya?

"Illya was right behind me, sir. What does his brain sensor report as his location."

"It reports nothing, Mr. Solo. His sensor has faded out."

In the closet Solo did not move. All U.N.C.L.E. agents of first rank now carried tiny sensors implanted. The sensor located them when all other means failed. The sensors would not function from only three causes:—distance over one hundred miles; some device that could block their signal—and death.

In the closet Napoleon Solo felt alone and suddenly frightened.

ACT II

HAWK IN A SPARROW SUIT

ILLYA KURYAKIN had a dream. He was a child again in his far-off home, riding wildly on a Mongol pony over the great vast spaces of the Steppes. The great forests, and the deserts, and the towering mountains of all of Siberia seemed to flash past under the flying hooves of his horse. He shouted to faceless companions, the abandoned comrades of his Russian youth. He shouted in happy Russian.

And woke up shouting the Russian words to cold, blank walls.

For a moment he lay still, not quite out of the dream, and feeling sad. Whenever he dreamed of his youth, his friends were always faceless, as if he carried a guilt for abandoning his homeland and his people.

Then he was out of the dream and coldly awake. He did not move at once, but looked around him without moving. He was in a small, dark room. Four walls without windows. Stone walls and a dirt floor and a wooden door studded with iron. A stone ceiling very high. The room was like a deep well and he was in the bottom.

Illya sat up. He could sit up. Neither his hands nor his feet were tied. But he had been stripped, literally, and dressed in some neutral grey trousers and a grey sweater. They had done a good job on him. All he had was the long, thin steel needle under the fake scar on his leg. Even his ring was gone.

He stood up and began to study the room. The first step was to see if he was being observed. He checked every inch of the walls and ceilings but could locate no hidden cameras, and he was sure that everything was real stone with no one-way mirror for observation. He also found no evidence of a microphone, but that was almost impossible to be sure about.

Next he studied the floor and walls for any possible secret doors. As far as he could tell the floor was solid earth, and the walls solid stone. The door was heavy oak, iron banded, and apparently locked by a bar on the outside. Illya saw no evidence of any other kind of lock.

He stood at the door and leaned his ear against it. He could hear

nothing. There seemed to be no guard, and no sounds of anyone else. Not even distant sounds. Wherever he was, Illya was buried deep. He turned and once more surveyed the room in which he stood.

He assumed that by now he would have been missed, but with his radios gone, and buried in this room, they would have a hard time finding him. Unless he could get out somehow and give them some help. They would have traced his sensor, unless he had been taken too far. He had no way of knowing just what time it was, or how long he had been unconscious.

His bright, deep-set eyes continued to survey the room. He was looking for a flaw, any flaw. He thought of a conversation he had once had with Napoleon. He had insisted that there was no such thing as a prison cell from which a man could not escape without outside help, and without bringing any tools in with him. Solo had not been sure.

"What a man can build, Napoleon, a man can break out of," Illya had insisted.

"You mean there has to be a flaw?"

"There is always a flaw, my playboy buddy," Illya had said.

"If you can find it, my Russian jailbreaker," Solo had said.

If you can find it. Yes, that was the problem. And Illya recalled wryly that he had not said how long it might take. It had taken old Monte Cristo a devil of a long time. But Monte Cristo, too, had made it in the end.

All the while Illya had been thinking; his quick eyes had been searching the walls, the floor, the distant ceiling high above. It was sometimes best to let your eyes look while your brain thought of something else. The eyes, trained, could often see what the confused brain could not.

And he saw the drain.

It was set low in the floor far at the rear of the stone prison. Illya crossed to it and got down on his hands and knees. It was a small round drain in a low part of the floor. About four inches in diameter, and held in place by two screws. With the screws out it was a three-inch pipe. It seemed to lead straight down. Yet it had to connect to a main drain somewhere, or turn and run outside.

Illya considered the pipe. It was much too narrow for him to crawl down. He could dig, and probably find an eventual escape, but that would be a long job without tools.

He stood and again toured the room. This time he saw a faint glint. It was in another corner of the floor. He got down and looked closely. Then he began to dig in the dirt. He came up with a steel soup spoon. He looked at it. Probably left by some former prisoner. It reminded him that he was hungry, and that they who had cap-

tured him would probably come to feed him at some time.

Which made the prospect of digging out around the drain pipe just about impossible. It would take so long they would be sure to catch him. With the spoon in his hand he again went slowly around the room. He found nothing. He sat down in the center and felt discouraged. Maybe he had been wrong. Or maybe he simply didn't have enough time.

Then Mr. Kuryakin found himself staring at the door.

The heavy wooden door with its iron bands. His dark eyes blinked. He ran his hand through his shock of blond hair. He blinked, and looked hard at the door. There was something about it. He stood up quickly and walked to the door. With the spoon he pried at the wood in the center where four round iron studs protruded.

The wood was rotten!

With the spoon he could dig a small hole with little pressure. Around the four iron studs. The wood, just at those points, had rotted from years of moisture and contact with the rusted iron. It would be slow work, but he was sure he could dig around all four studs.

And he was sure that the studs were the anchors that held the lock-bar on the outside!

In which case two should be enough. If he could dig out just two of the iron studs. If—

His gaze fell on the bottom of the door. The wood had rotted at the bottom also. And the cross bracing of iron was held on this side by a heavy spike. He bent. The spike moved in his fingers. It was loose. It would dig through the door much faster than the spoon.

On his knees Kuryakin dug at the loose spike with his spoon. It was not easy. He dug, pried, used the spoon as a lever. He began to sweat. Every few minutes he stopped to listen. There was no sound outside the door. Not even a distant sound. He dug on.

Until with a pull that took all his strength and gashed his fingers, the spike came out. He stood up with the spike. It had a sharp point.

He began to dig the wood out from around the studs at the side of the door farthest from the door jamb.

He stopped every few minutes to listen.

TWO

SOLO LISTENED inside the dark closet. It had been at least fifteen minutes since he had heard a sound. Nothing seemed to move beyond the locked door. He turned and began to move every large object in the closet. He piled the clothes hamper, an old desk, and two metal filing cabinets in a line from the rear wall to the door.

Braced with his back against the line of furniture, he placed his feet against the door and pushed with

all his strength, slowly building up pressure. The door creaked, but did not give. Solo relaxed, breathed deeply, and once more used his whole body like a jack against the door. It creaked again, gave with a faint tearing of wood.

The third time he braced, and forced his feet against the door, he felt it slip and almost open as the wood tore with a low rasping sound. He stepped to the door and listened. There was no sound. He turned and went to the hamper and found a white health club suit that fitted him. He dressed in it, and went back to the door.

He listened again. No sound. Not even the humming noise or the noises from the health club below.

He leaned his full weight against the door, braced his feet on the floor, and pressed steadily and slowly. The door sprung open with a last ripping sound. It swung away. Solo caught it with a quick motion before it banged against the wall, and stood in the dark corridor listening.

Nothing seemed to move.

The door to the room above the hot room was still open. He looked in cautiously. The strange machine was still there, but silent and motionless now. Before he went to examine the machine, Solo stepped carefully along the hall to the door he had come up through earlier. He listened at the door. He heard slow noises below, as if the health club staff were going about the normal business of closing for the night.

He went back along the corridor to the far end, where a cross corridor intersected. He searched down both wings of the cross corridor and saw nothing. He went back along the dark hallway to the room of the machine.

In the bare room he looked around. There was nothing in the room but the strange machine with its black tube aimed down into the floor. The machine was still, and the large tape spool was gone.

Solo studied the machine for a time in the dark, but he could make nothing out of it. It seemed like a combination of tape recorder and computer, with a sealed section in the center with dials and buttons that he did not recognize.

He got down and examined the long black tube that went down into the floor. It resembled an advanced and complicated X-ray machine. It was slightly warm to his touch, as if shut down only recently, and as if it generated heat, which probably was why it was being used in a hot room.

The ceiling of the hot room was exposed through the hole in the floor of the room. A perforated ceiling, and Napoleon Solo could just make out parts of the hot room below. There was no doubt that the long black tube was aimed exactly at the deck chair in which Forsyte had been sitting. Which meant that Forsyte had been the target, since

it was now certain that he had been purposely maneuvered into that specific chair.

Solo stood up. Whatever the strange machine was, he was sure that it was how Forsyte transmitted the data—and probably not voluntarily. Solo raised his ring to call help. It was time U.N.C.L.E. moved in.

"Control—"

He stopped and froze. He had heard a noise. A soft, sliding noise. It seemed to come from a door to the right in the room. Solo stepped to the door and listened. The sound did not come again. He looked around for a weapon. There was nothing. The sound came again, like a man crawling slowly across the floor.

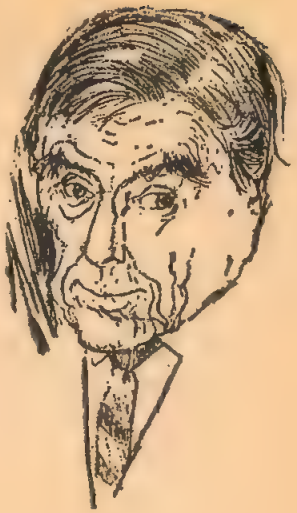
Solo opened the door quickly, alert and ready to use his karate-trained hands.

It was another dark room, but Solo saw what caused the weird noise. The wide, muscular man who had been following Forsyte was crawling weakly across the floor. He looked up and saw Solo. There was blood on his face. Solo stepped to him and bent.

He heard the step too late. Half-turned, Napoleon Solo was hit solid on the head and fell on his face.

THREE

ILLYA KURYAKIN listened. There was still no sound of anyone outside the heavy wooden door.



Illya carefully removed the last iron stud. There was a sliding sound, metal sliding against metal, and then a heavy thud as the cross bar hit the floor outside. A solid thud, but not loud. The floor outside must be dirt, too.

Illya opened the heavy door and stepped out. The corridor was low and dark and the floor was dirt. There was no one in sight. The iron bar that had locked the door lay on the floor with the iron loop released by the studs still around it. Illya picked it up as a weapon, and started to the left where he saw a faint rectangle of light.

The rectangle was much closer than he had expected. The light was dimmer. Illya peered out of the open end of the corridor. He saw a large and high room, a cellar. He was in the cellar of some kind of large house. Old garden furniture was piled everywhere.

The debris of many years of a large house. He guessed that the room he had been had perhaps been a wine room at one time, which would partly account for the drain.

The garden furniture, and the nature of the cellar, pointed to a country house somewhere. From the size of the cellar, Illya guessed that the house was some old mansion up in the Hudson Valley probably not too far from the city. Which also meant that this was probably the sub-basement.

He listened again, heard nothing, and moved out into the open cellar, gripping the iron bar. He crossed quickly with his cat-like silence toward a low stone archway. He went through the archway and saw, as he had expected, a flight of stone steps leading upward.

He went up the stairs swiftly and silently. There was a heavy wooden door at the top. It was open. Illya scowled. The security seemed very lax. He pushed open the door slowly, and then flattened back. A man in a black suit sat on a chair a few feet from the door.

The man was tilted back against the wall, his right side facing Illya, and a gun in his lap. The man was not asleep, but he was not alert. He had not heard Illya open the door.

Illya peered out and saw that where the man sat was in another corridor that had once been a cellar—the first basement. But it had been converted, and now had darkly panelled walls. An ornate door was at the far end. Illya saw no other guard, and watched the man in the chair yawn and stretch.

Illya leaped out in the middle of the guard's stretch. The guard heard him, tried to break his stretch and go down for his gun. Illya's iron bar caught him on the side of the head and the man went over, chair and all. Illya took the gun and jumped over him and ran down the corridor to the ornate door.

This door, too, was not locked. Illya opened it cautiously. There was no guard and a wooden staircase leading up. Illya went up these stairs slowy and carefully. There was no door at the top, but the stairs made a sharp left and emerged into a large, vaulted baronial-style hallway. Or they opened into a smaller and lower passage that led from the baronial hall.

Now there were sounds and people.

Illya Kuryakin heard voices, and men walked back and forth across the great hall. Through high windows Illya saw the fading sun of evening. From the position of the sun it was clear that the house faced west. The men who paraded through the vaulted entry hall all carried guns.

Illya looked straight across from where he stood to the opposite wall of the smaller passage. There was a door that, if he knew the usual

layout of mansions such as this, should lead into a back hall. Unseen, he moved silently across the narrow passage and went through the door. It was a back hall.

He went down the back hall toward the far door, looking for the door that should lead into the kitchen. He held his submachine-gun ready. He could not find the kitchen door, and he suddenly heard voices coming toward the back hall from in front of him. He turned to retrace his steps, and heard someone coming from the other end. He looked around quickly. In the rear hall he was trapped, and one gun would not win against a house full of enemies.

Quickly he tried the doors that led from the rear hall. The first two were locked. The third was open, and Illya jumped through just as the first men appeared in the rear hall. He stood for a moment catching his breath—and then became aware that he was in a lighted room.

"Ah, Mr. Kuryakin. Come in, come in."

The voice was soft and mocking. It came from behind him in the lighted room. Illya tensed. His muscles bunched as he prepared to turn.

"I wouldn't try that, my dear Illya. If you turn slowly you will find that you are carefully covered from about six directions," the mocking voice said. "Not to mention the men in the rear hall, who will come in the instant you turn."

Illya turned slowly. He saw the black-uniformed guards all around him, their guns leveled. He was in a comfortable paneled room furnished with the best leather furniture. A lion's head bared its teeth above a massive fireplace. But that was not what Illya looked at. He looked at a tall, distinguished, grey-haired man in immaculate dinner clothes and black tie who stood in the center of the room with a drink in his hand and a smile on his well-groomed face.

"That's better," this man said in his mocking voice. "Now lay down your gun, my dear Illya, and we can have our talk."

Illya laid down his gun and stood facing the elegant man.

"Good. I must say you showed the usual U.N.C.L.E. initiative in getting here," the man said, and looked at his watch. "In good time, too. I told my people that a simple spoon left in the right place would be enough for Illya Kuryakin to escape, and I was right, eh? But not all U.N.C.L.E. men could have done it, you know? I have often wondered why you continue to take a back seat to Solo. I consider you far more dangerous."

"Thank you," Illya said wryly. "I'll be glad to tell Napoleon. You've been watching me? You left the spoon?"

The elegant man shrugged. "A small amusement. But not all a game, eh? I have always told my

fellow Council members that keeping an U.N.C.L.E. agent busy is far better than the most total security. Give them a project to occupy their busy minds and hands, and that way I always know what you are up to, eh? I mean, my dear Illya, if I had not provided you with the spoon and the old door, you might have come up with an escape plan that would have been better. You see?"

The elegant man laughed. His men, their guns ready, all grinned. Illya smiled himself.

"Very clever, Danton. I have always said that you are one of the most clever of THRUSH leaders."

Emil Danton, North American Leader of THRUSH, bowed his head and laughed again as his men moved in on Illya Kuryakin.

FOUR

SOLO CAME awake in an instant. He did not move. Only his eyes moved. As far as he could see he was on the floor of the room where he had been attacked. The room was dark, and nothing seemed to move anywhere.

He sat up. He was not tied. He listened but heard nothing. Then he heard a groan. It came from close by in the dark room. Solo looked to his right and saw the figure on the floor. He crawled to the man. It was the wide, muscular man who had followed Forsyte.

Solo looked down at the man, who moaned again but did not open his eyes. Solo saw the blood and the ugly wound on the man's head. He raised the man's eyelids. The eyes rolled. The wide man had obviously been hit harder, or more often, than Solo.

Solo stood up. His head hurt, but he brushed it off. He was thinking. He still had his ring. But before he contacted Control he wanted to know more. Why had they left him and the muscular man alive—and who were they? He got part of his answer at once.

He went out into the larger bare room where the machine had been. The machine was gone. He looked down through the hole in the floor. The hot room below was dark. Solo turned and went warily out into the hall. All was dark and silent. He walked along the hall to the door he had come up through, opened it softly, and looked down.

The health club below was pitch dark. There was no sound of any kind. Solo moved carefully down the stairs and came out in the dark health club. He went through the steam room and the hot room and the shower room. There was no one anywhere. Out in the pool the water stretched blue and smooth like glass. The pool was dark.

Solo turned and returned to the locker room. The room was dark and deserted, too, the lockers all standing open. He found his clothes in his locker and realized that whoever had attacked him had un-

doubtedly known that he was somewhere in the building by the simple fact that his clothes were in the locker.

His pistol was gone, but otherwise the lieutenant's uniform was untouched.

He found nothing in the locker room. He went into the club office and searched the desk and files. There was nothing at all but the records and other data that related to the health club. In fact, the entire club seemed to have suddenly stopped in its tracks, leaving everything where it had fallen. Solo had a strong feeling that whoever had been operating the strange machine had cleared out and was not coming back.

Which would explain why they had left him and the muscular man alive. They felt safe enough, once they had gone, and they probably did not want dead bodies around to bring the police on their trail. They had simply hit the muscular type too hard. That gave Napoleon Solo a thought: if they had hit the muscular person as well as himself, then that meant that the muscular man was not one of them. Who was he, and why had he been following Forsyte?

Solo went back upstairs. The short, wide man had not moved. He still lay there in a kind of coma. Probably with a skull fracture or a bad concussion. Solo bent down over him to examine his clothes. There were no labels in his clothes

His pockets were empty. Then Solo noticed his fingers.

The fingerprints had been removed surgically.

Solo stared at the fingers for a moment. Then he reached down and pushed up the man's sleeve, unbuttoned his shirt cuff and rolled it up. The number was there: T-778890.

THRUSH.

So THRUSH was in this—interested in Colonel Forsyte and the health club. Solo narrowed his eyes. He had little doubt now as to

what had happened to Illya. The small Russian was certainly in the hands of THRUSH. If Illya was still alive.

Solo looked down at the muscular man. The question was—was THRUSH part of the transmission of the secret data, or was THRUSH after the same thing U.N.C.L.E. was? Was THRUSH, too, interested in just how Forsyte and the others had transmitted vital secrets when they were all men formerly above reproach? From the actions of the muscular man he was sure that that was just what THRUSH was doing—looking for whatever was being used on Forsyte.

It fitted with the action in Anagua. Agent 44 had probably been killed not by the spies but by THRUSH. So THRUSH, too, had somehow learned what information Forsyte could transmit and had joined the search. Solo thought about the weird machine—and what it might do in the hands of THRUSH.

The thought made him shudder—and then he heard the footsteps. Someone, more than one man, was coming up the stairs from the health club. He did not think that it was any of the health club staff returning. It was probably THRUSH. He thought quickly. He was still dressed in the white uniform of an attendant of the health club. He bent down as if searching the unconscious THRUSH agent on the floor.

The footsteps came quickly along the corridor, entered the room where the machine had been, and stopped suddenly close behind him.

"Freeze, friend," a voice said.

Solo did a good imitation of a man surprised, and then scared. He started, gave a small jump, and then froze as directed. Hands came up behind him and touched him expertly for weapons. The hands went away.

"Up. Turn around."

Solo turned.

The tall man who had been driving the car stood with a gun pointed at Solo. Two other men were with him.

The tall man jerked his head curtly toward the unconscious muscular man.

"Take a look at Gregor," the tall man snapped.

One of the other men circled Napoleon Solo and bent over Gregor. The tall man stared straight at Solo.

"All right, friend, start talking. Why'd you hit Gregor?"

"He was snooping around," Solo said in his best tough-man voice. "So are you."

The man who was looking at Gregor looked up. "He's hit bad. Maybe a fracture."

"Did you do it?" the tall man said to Solo.

"He fell," Solo said.

"Where are the others?"

"What others?" Solo said.

"How do they get the info from Forsyte?"

"Who's Forsyte?" Solo said.

The man who had not spoken suddenly swore. "Let's finish the dirty—"

"Shut up!" the tall one said.

"But he—"

"But he's one of them," the tall one said. "This must be where Forsyte passes the data. This joker knows how. They've slipped out on us, but we've got this one, and The Boss'll want to talk to him."

The other two nodded.

"Bring Gregor. I'll handle this one," the tall man said. The tall man grinned a wolfish grin at Solo. "Our Boss'll talk with you, friend. And believe me, you'll talk back."

They marched Solo out. Two of them carried the moaning Gregor. The tall man prodded Solo with his pistol. Napoleon Solo let them take him.

FIVE

EMIL DANTON leaned down over Illya Kuryakin.

"You'll talk, my dear Illya. You know our methods. And don't rely on that sensor you have implanted to bring my old friend Waverly. We have blocked its signal."

"You've been busy," Illya said drily.

"Too busy," Danton said. "Sometimes I think we all spend much too much time devising weapons and defenses, and then making counter-weapons and counter-devices. It's a weary circle. Perhaps we should make a pact—no more tricky weapons on either side. Go back to plain muscle and guns. It would save a lot of overhead."

Illya smiled. He was in the same room of the mansion, the massive fireplace looming before him, and seated in a special chair. He was not bound; there was no need. The chair held him by the electronic force that sent a searing pain through him if he tried to move. The guards stood silent. Only Emil Danton spoke.

"Come, Illya. You know you will talk. Save me the trouble and mess of torture or drugs. I'm truly weary of all that fuss. I know that you will stand the torture, and you know I'll use it if necessary. But you also know the drugs will do the job, and you can't resist them."

"Try me, Danton," Illya said. "This time you may be surprised. I may not know what you want to know."

"You know a great deal I want to know," Danton purred. "Still, you may be right about the immediate problem. What do you know about Forsyte? The good colonel has a fine record."

"I know that. He has a fine record," Illya said.

"Not a spy."

"Not a spy," Illya agreed.

"Yet he has passed on secret data."

"He has?" Illya raised an eyebrow.

Danton sighed. "Really, Illya, don't fence with me. You were following him. You arranged a test; we know that. I'm sorry about your agent in Managua. Not all my colleagues share my belief in avoiding unnecessary violence."

"You're a gentleman, Danton," Illya mocked.

"I try to be. After all, just because we are spies, thieves, murderers, and all that, is no reason we have to be uncouth. So, let us admit that we all want to know just why a man of Forsyte's caliber turned spy, and how he is transmitting his data."

"All right, I'll admit that," Illya agreed. "I'm rather glad to know that you don't know."

"I'm sure you are, but we will know. Now, I think you know more than we do. A bad situation. I want you to tell me what you know. Right?"

Illya shrugged. "I assure you I don't know anything."

"How does Forsyte pass the data, Illya?"

"I don't know."

"What does that health club have to do with it?"

"I don't know. Perhaps nothing."

"He went straight home from that club. We followed him. He had no other chance to pass data."

"Maybe he didn't sell any secrets today."

Danton slapped Illya. "Don't be too funny, my friend. He follows a routine like a robot! We know that. His routine today was the same as yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that!"

"He's a very dull boy," Illya said.

Danton spun on his immaculate heel. The elegant North American Leader of THRUSH nodded to his men.

"Take him," he said.

Two of the black-uniformed men stepped forward, grinning. They had a hypodermic syringe with a very long needle of the kind used to drip a solution into the veins. One of them held Illya's arm tight and stiff. The other prepared to use the needle. Danton had walked to a far wall and stood with his back turned. The THRUSH leader did not like the sight of violence.

Illya braced, concentrating his mind to use all the previous programming against divulgence of information he could. He felt the waves of mental strength tightening on his trained brain.

A loud buzzing sound broke the silence and the tension of the room. Danton turned abruptly and stared at a speaker on his desk. He motioned sharply.

"Wait," the dapper THRUSH leader snapped.

He strode to the speaker and flipped a switch. He listened. The voice over the speaker was too low for Illya to hear. Danton switched

off and turned with a smile to Illya.

"We may not need your help after all, my dear Illya. Too bad. I'm afraid that means we have no use for you. You see, my men have brought one of the gang getting the secrets from Forsyte!"

SIX

THE DOOR TO the room opened and four men came in. Illya Kuryakin watched them. Three were obviously THRUSH agents in civilian clothes—the same three who had been in the alley. Illya saw the tall man in particular.

The fourth man was being pushed into the room by the tall man. The fourth man had his head down as if groggy, and wore the white uniform of the health club, but Illya was sure that he recognized the figure. It was someone he knew.

Danton stepped forward. "So, we've got one of you, eh? Good work, men. We'll have this one talking in no time. Or would you rather just tell us what we want to know without any trouble?"

Danton stared at the white-suited man, who still stood with his head down. The tall man pushed him forward.

"They beat up Gregor," the tall man said.

"The devil with Gregor!" Danton snapped. "What I want is to know just how Forsyte transmits his information. There has to be some very special method, and we want it. Now, you, tell us where the others are, and—"

Danton stopped. He stood there with his mouth open and stared at the figure in the white health club suit. His bright eyes blinked. Then he stepped forward and grasped the hair of the man. He pulled the head up.

Solo grinned. "Hello, Danton."

Danton dropped Solo's hair and jumped back as if he had been bitten. For a long moment he stared at Solo, who smiled and looked around the room like a man on a sightseeing tour. Solo grinned at Illya. Danton rubbed his face, brushed his hand through his immaculate grey hair. Then he began to shout.

"You fools!"

Danton shouted at the tall man. "You stupid ape! One of the others, eh? You idiotic incompetents! Do you know who this is? Eh? Don't you know your enemies! What morons am I forced to work with? I send you to get a gang with some method of taking secrets from reliable people, and you bring me another U.N.C.L.E. agent!"

The tall man stammered. "But—but he was wearing one of the uniforms. He was standing over Gregor. He—"

"Idiot! This is Napoleon Solo! Don't you know the Chief of Section-II of U.N.C.L.E.? How did you get to be an agent of THRUSH? I

send you for someone valuable, and you bring me Solo!"

The tall man protested. "How could I—I mean, we're new in New York, sir, and—"

"Quiet!" Danton roared. "Do you know what else you've done?"

The tall man gulped. "No, sir. I—"

"Shut up!" Danton shouted. "How many of you were there in your group?"

"Four, sir. The alternate group brought that other man here, and we—"

"And how many of you are there here now?" Danton snarled.

"With Gregor, sir, a total of four. We all—"

"Then who is doing your work? Eh? Who is watching the health club?"

The tall man was white. "No one, sir. They—they got out of the building without our seeing them anyway. So when they didn't come out, we went in, and we found Gregor and this man, and we were sure he was one of them, so we brought him here—"

The tall man trailed off in his weak explanation. Danton stared at him.

"You mean that you have lost contact. We have lost contact. You bunglers have let them get away, and we—"

Danton's tirade went on. All the men in the room were watching him. The three captors of Solo were pale with fear. The guards had their guns down. Solo edged away toward a guard who was looking only at Danton.

Illya touched his nose.

Solo jumped for the guard.

Illya hurled himself out of the special chair. The shock of pain, like a hammer blow, knocked him to his knees, but he was free of the chair. He jumped up and chopped a guard once on the throat.

Solo had a machine-gun in his hand. He shot down two guards who reacted to the sudden break.

Illya Kuryakin had a gun and sprayed the room.

The THRUSH agents all hurled themselves under cover. The tall man went down, spitting blood. Danton screamed and dived for a heavy oak table.

"Door!" Solo cried.

The two agents careened through the door and out into the baronial entrance hallway. Three guards came running into the vast hall. Solo and Illya shot them down with two quick bursts. Moments later they were out the front door and running across a gravel driveway toward the thick bushes of the grounds.

"There! Get them!"

It was Danton's voice, his courage back now that he was out of range. He was in the doorway behind them. Black-uniformed THRUSH guards poured across the driveway and the grounds.

Solo and Illya crashed through the thick bushes, ran across the

parklike grounds under the tall oaks in the night. There was a glint of water to the left.

"The river!" Solo hissed.

"If we can," Illya panted.

They ran, and behind them the THRUSH agents pounded in mad pursuit. The night was dark and the THRUSH men were getting in each other's way. Danton's voice could be heard roaring his orders.

Illya Kuryakin stopped. "Not the river yet. They'll block us. Let's cut down the odds."

"Take two of them?"

"Right."

The two agents circled back and dropped into the cover of a small ravine. Soon the THRUSH search moved close to them. Two THRUSH men passed above the low ravine. Solo and Illya rose up behind them like wraiths in the night. Both men fell without a sound under the single chops of the U.N.C.L.E. agents.

Moments later Solo and Illya were moving in the line of search toward the river. Danton was at the other end of the line. The search fanned out until Danton ordered a halt.

"They've gone to cover. Turn back and don't miss anywhere, you understand!" Danton shouted.

His men all nodded. Danton's voice was no longer smooth and urbane. The penalty for failure was high in THRUSH.

The search turned back inland.

Illya and Solo slid silently into the river and began to swim south.

ACT III

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE LATELY?

THEY EMERGED dripping from the river, a mile and a half south of the massive old mansion on the Hudson shore. They moved warily. Illya Kuryakin motioned Napoleon Solo to silence and crept up from the bank to a paved road that ran near the shore.

"All clear?" Solo whispered.

"All clear at the moment," Illya said. "Danton isn't a fool, Napoleon. He'll have figured it out by now, and then he'll fan out along the river."

"At least we know that THRUSH doesn't know anything about how Forsyte passed the information," Solo said.

"Do we?"

"We do," Solo said, and explained the macabre machine that he had seen in the room above the hot room of the Health Club.

"A machine?" Illya said. "No wonder THRUSH is so interested. They must have an idea, and in their hands such a machine would be murderous."

Solo was about to answer when both men heard the sound. Cars approached along the river road. They had no headlights. Illya and Solo went across the road quickly and burrowed into the deep bushes.

Two dark jeeps went past slowly. They were filled with THRUSH men, and in each jeep a sub-leader

scanned the river and the shore through infra-red glasses.

The jeeps passed and vanished. But Illya and Solo did not move. They waited where they were hidden in the bushes. Moments later another car came by, its motor almost soundless in the night. In this car a man scanned the inland side of the road through infra-red binoculars.

The third car passed on and disappeared into the night.

"Let's move," Solo said.

With Illya Kuryakin following, Napoleon Solo walked away from the road toward the lights of a town some distance inland from the river. They avoided the roads, and crossed dark fields in the night. When they were near the town, and were sure that they were clear of THRUSH, Solo bent over his ring.

"Control Central this is Sonny. Come in Control Central. Sonny and Bubba calling."

Waverly's voice came calm in the night. "You have located Mr. *uh,* Kuryakin, I see, Mr. Solo. Good. Where are you?"

"About thirty miles up the Hudson Valley from New York. We've run into THRUSH."

"THRUSH, eh?" Waverly's voice said quietly. "I can't say that I'm surprised. The affair in Anagua had their fine touch about it. I gather that you have eluded them?"

"We were both caught, but we escaped. Danton is running the operation," Solo said.

"Emil himself? They must place considerable value on the affair," Waverly's impeturbable voice said. "Which I do myself, as I told you, Mr. Solo."

"Do you want us to go back and tackle THRUSH again?"

"That can wait, Mr. Solo," Waverly's voice said, and for the first time there was an edge to the voice of the Section-I Chief. "It seems that you may be safe, but I'm afraid no one else is. In addition to Forsyte, another man visited that health club today, gentlemen. He went there early this morning. Unlike all the others, who appear to have noticed nothing amiss, this man reported to his superiors that he was strangely 'groggy,' as he put it, when he left the health club."

"They must have used the machine, maybe too long," Solo said. "I heard their boss say it could have bad effects."

"Very probably, Mr. Solo," Waverly said. "But that is not my concern just now. What concerns me is the nature of the man in question. You see, he had the full details of the United States' nuclear detection program for outer space in his head."

Solo whistled. "The whole detection system?"

"Precisely," Waverly's voice said. "You understand that in the wrong hands this top secret system information could mean the control of space. I do not want this

data to be passed on to anyone, especially not to THRUSH. The job has been put into our hands."

Solo and Illya looked at each other. The outer space nuclear detection program was so secret its very existence was not known outside the immediate military, the White House, and U.N.C.L.E. In the wrong hands—?

"We don't know where the machine or the men who use it have gone," Solo said. "THRUSH doesn't seem to know either."

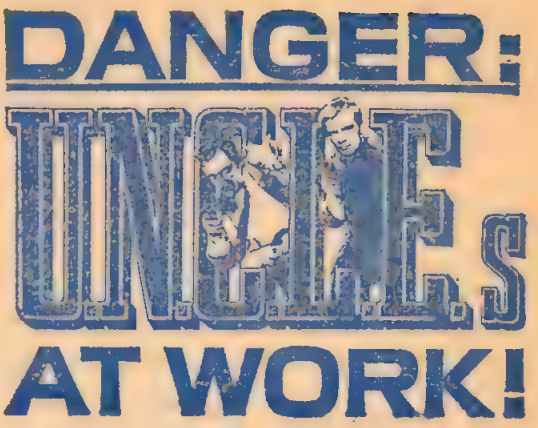
"Mr. Solo," Waverly's dry voice said from the distant room of U.N.C.L.E. Headquarters, "never underestimate THRUSH or me. Or yourself, for that matter. You may recall that you reported the machine. Our men were outside the health club. Fortunately, one of our teams noticed some men carrying a bulky object out of the next building and followed them."

"They must have had a secret passage between the buildings," Solo said.

"Apparently," Waverly said. "Be that as it may, our team followed them to an electronics plant near Princeton, New Jersey. The plant is named Rand Electronics, Inc. A Mr. Edgar Rand is listed as president. We do not know if Rand is involved, or if his plant is simply being used. But I suggest you find out."

"Yes sir," Solo said.

"The team on watch there is Peters and Jenkins. I want you to contact them and assume command of the operation—at once."



"Yes sir."

"And Mr. Solo, get that machine."

"Yes sir."

The night became silent. Where they crouched on the edge of the village they could hear the sounds of revelry and whisky from a roadhouse in the center of the town. The people of the small town were at their pleasure, their momentary joys, while around them in the dark night a deadly game was being played by men they had never heard of, a game that could mean the end of their lives or their pleasures if it ended the wrong way. And one way or the other they would probably never know that the game had even been played.

"Well?" Illya said.

"I guess we go to Princeton."

"Perhaps we better stop and pick up our equipment first, Napoleon."

"Peters and Jenkins can supply

us," Solo said. "The Rand plant may be only a short stop. From what I heard, they sounded like they were ready for a big move."

"Then we better move," Illya said.

The two agents searched the night carefully. THRUSH would not give up easily. It was certain that the black-garbed soldiers were still scouring the countryside for them. Solo and Illya entered the small village silently, like shadows in the night that flitted in and out of the light from the windows of the houses. They moved within the desperately happy noises from the tavern.

Outside the tavern there was a row of cars. One, parked farther away from the door than most of the cars, still had its keys in the ignition. Illya climbed in behind the wheel. Solo sat beside him. They started the engine and drove off. Illya turned into a side road that wound through the hills of Palisades Interstate Park. They did not see THRUSH.

An hour later, as the moon rose high, they crossed the border into New Jersey and headed south and east.

TWO

THE PLANT OF Rand Electronics was a long, low, two-story building of yellow brick set in the rich park-like countryside of the Princeton area. Once mainly farmland, and then big estates, the rich area had been caught up with by industry, and now many light, smokeless industries such as Rand Electronics were settling all across the landscape.

Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo parked their stolen car off the road a quarter of a mile from the plant. They walked cautiously closer. The low building of the plant was bright with lights behind its high cyclone fence and a long row of thick bushes that edged a fine green lawn. Shadows moved inside the main factory wing of the plant.

"Night shift," Solo said.

"It doesn't look much like they're carrying on clandestine production of secret machines," Illya said.

"That's probably what they want us to think."

"And it could be a trick. The health club people could have been throwing us off by coming here," Illya said.

"We better find out," Solo said.

"Peters and Jenkins should be able to tell us," Illya said.

They moved on with their eyes alert in the night for their fellow agents. They spotted the dark shape of the U.N.C.L.E. car back off the road just outside the drive up to the plant. At the gate of the plant there was an open gate in the fence and a lighted sentry house. All was quiet at the gate, and Solo and Illya approached the car of their fellow agents.

"All clear, Peters?" Solo said as they neared the dark car.

"All clear," a muffled voice said.

Illya, behind Solo, went for the THRUSH machine-gun he still carried. Napoleon Solo dove for the cover of dark bushes.

The "All clear" of the muffled voice was the wrong signal. All U.N.C.L.E. agents used a recognition signal in answer to the questions of "All clear?" The muffled voice had given the wrong signal.

The two agents reacted instantly —but too late. Before Illya Kuryakin could bring his gun up, two men sprang from the bushes beside him, their guns already aimed at him.

Solo, flat in the bushes, looked up at feet and faces that stood over him. The dapper agent got to his feet with his hands up. Illya already stood beside the car, disarmed and watched by the other two men. A fifth man got out of the car. There was no sign of Peters or Jenkins.

"Sit," one of the five men ordered.

They sat.

"Keep your hands in front of you and in sight."

They placed their hands in their laps in full sight.

"Report to the Boss," the leader of the men said to one of the other men. "Tell him we have two more U.N.C.L.E. agents. These two we got alive."

The man went off to report. Illya and Solo glanced at each other. Solo looked up at the leader above him.

"You killed Peters and Jenkins?" Solo said.

The man shrugged. "They resisted. You two were smarter."

Solo and Illya said nothing. They sat with their backs against the U.N.C.L.E. car, and their hands in sight. The five captors ringed them but did nothing else. The five were clearly waiting.

What they were waiting for became clear an hour later.

Nothing had happened at the plant of Rand Electronics. No one went in or out as they all waited in the night. Then the sound of a helicopter filled the night some distance away. The copter seemed to come low, and then there was silence.

The five captors waited with expectant looks on their grim faces.

There was noise in the bushes, and three men suddenly seemed to loom up in the night. One man walked ahead of the other two. He came and stood over Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo.

"Well, gentlemen, that didn't take long."

Emil Danton smiled down at the two agents, his immaculate grey hair unruffled.

"You two simply don't seem to be able to keep away from me, now do you?" Danton went on.

"We enjoy good company," Illya said.

"But different circumstances," Solo added.

Danton laughed. "Well put. I really can't take any credit for recapturing you, can I? Isn't it lucky that I had a team of my men watching all U.N.C.L.E. agents involved in this affair? They not only led us to Rand Electronics, but to you two. Some days everything just works out nicely."

"You must live right, Danton," Solo said.

"I must, at that," the elegant THRUSH leader said. "And much as I'd like to remain and talk with you gentlemen, business calls. I think it's time I had a look inside that plant."

Danton motioned abruptly to his men. They jumped at his command. One of them, the leader of the five who had captured Illya and Solo, nodded to the two prisoners.

"Shall we kill them, Boss?"

Danton rubbed his chin. "Kill them? Not immediately. No, they are safe here, and after we conclude this little episode, they'll make a fine bonus to hand to Council. We can kill them later."

"Yes, sir."

"Leave three men to guard them. I suggest that you bind them or handcuff them. They are clever fellows," Danton added.

Illya and Solo were roughly handcuffed with their hands behind them, and sat back against the car on the ground. Danton took his four men and conferred briefly. Then he turned to Illya and Solo. The THRUSH leader smiled.

"This should not take long, gentlemen. Then I'll be back, eh?"

"Don't hurry," Solo said. "We'll wait."

"Yes, you certainly will," Danton said.

The immaculately dressed member of THRUSH Council made a sharp gesture to his men, and the five of them moved off in the night, crossed the road, and began to walk toward the gate of Rand Electronics.

The night became silent.

Illya and Solo sat on the ground with their hands cuffed behind them. For a time the three guards watched them. Then, as time passed, the guards became bored. They whispered among themselves, and two of them went and sat down and lighted cigarettes. The third continued to watch the handcuffed agents.

Illya sat against the right front wheel of the U.N.C.L.E. car. Solo was against the front right door. After a time even the guard who was watching them began to pace, turning his back on them from time to time. During one of the periods when his back was turned, Solo touched Illya's foot with his foot.

Illya nodded. His handcuffed hands began to feel along the rim of the hubcap of the U.N.C.L.E. car. Solo, against the door, worked his cuffed hands beneath the car just

under the door. The guard turned back. Illya and Solo grinned at him. He scowled and looked away. It was bad form for a THRUSH guard to let U.N.C.L.E. agents smile at him.

The guard turned abruptly and walked away from them, looking at his watch. He continued toward where his two fellow guards were relaxing. Illya Kuryakin gave a quick tug and the hubcap came off behind him. There was a faint metalic sound. Both men froze and watched the guards. The guards did not seem to have heard.

Illya's deft fingers located the thin strip of foil attached to the wheel inside the hubcap. The handcuffs were just loose enough for him to wrap the foil around the chain in the center. Solo had found the tiny pistol under the car, where it was attached for just such an emergency.

The three guards were having a laughing argument about who was to watch them.

In a moment they would be back.

Illya turned his back toward Solo. Solo turned his back to Illya. The small blond Russian raised his arms away from his body behind him. Solo reached back until their hands touched. Solo's fingers found the thin thread on the foil around Illya's handcuffs and pulled.

One of the other guards was getting up, ready to come and watch the prisoners.

The sudden heat of the thermite foil seared Illya's wrists. The Russian gritted his teeth. Two seconds later the thermite had melted the chain and his hands were free. He quickly picked up the pistol Napoleon Solo had taken from beneath the car, and both men resumed their positions against the car.

The guard approached. Suddenly his eyes narrowed. He looked at them. It was clear on his face that he detected something wrong, but he was not sure. His gun ready, he came to them.

"Turn around," the guard commanded.

Illya pretended to try to turn. Impatiently the guard reached

down to turn Illya. The small Russian's hand shot up and grasped the man's neck. With a faint gurgle, the guard collapsed.

Solo and Illya were up and running in an instant, straight at where the other two guards relaxed under a dark tree. The guards heard them. One of them got his gun up. Illya shot him betwen the eyes with a single shot. The third guard tried to stand. Solo hammered him with a single blow of his manacled hands. The man dropped without a sound.

The two agents quickly picked up all weapons. Illya went to the trunk of the car and took out a long length of rope. They bound the two surviving THRUSH men. The one Solo had hit was still unconscious. This done, Illya retrieved another thermite foil from the hub of the wheel. It was a matter of seconds to release Solo. They then took a small picklock from under the rear seat of the U.N.C.L.E. car and removed the cuffs.

Illya looked at his watch. "Over an hour, Napoleon. Danton's been in there too long."

"With no sound of a fight," Solo said.

"Something's wrong," Illya said.

"Well, let's find out."

"Not in these clothes," Illya said. "Strip our friends; their suits might just fit. Lucky they're in civilian clothes."

The two agents changed clothes with the two guards. The suits were good enough. Each took another pistol from hiding places on the U.N.C.L.E. car—the machine-guns would have been too conspicuous.

"Let's go," Solo said. "We don't have time to hide."

The two agents began to walk across the road and up to the gate of the plant.

THREE

FIVE MINUTES later Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo walked in the front entrance to Rand Electronics. Just inside the double outer doors they stopped and blinked.

The entrance lobby of the electronics plant was bright and busy. Corridors led off three sides, and employees seemed to be walking along the corridors as if nothing at all had happened or could happen. Everything looked like business as usual—yet an hour earlier five armed THRUSH men had entered this plant.

Illya and Solo looked at each other with raised eyebrows.

Directly in front of them a pretty blonde sat behind a reception desk. As they entered she was joking with a young man in the white coat of a laboratory technician. She saw them, and quickly shooed the young man away and gave Illya and Solo a

dazzling smile as they walked up to her.

"Yes, gentlemen. Can I help you?"

"Jones and Ivanov from the defense department," Solo said, using the same story he had used to get them past the gate.

"Mr. Jones and Mr. Ivanov, of course," the girl said as if she knew their famous names by heart. She was every inch the beautiful receptionist. "May I ask who you wish to see?"

"You work late," Illya said, as he looked around at the activity along all the corridors.

"Two shifts," the girl said brightly. "You gentlemen should know that, defense contracts and all."

"Very good," Solo said.

"We try to keep production going," the receptionist said. "Now who did you say you wanted to see?"

"Mr. Rand," Illya said.

"Do you have an appointment? It's rather late for Mr. Rand."

"No, we have no appointment," Illya said.

"You might say this is a surprise visit," Solo said.

The blonde became frosty. "I see. Well, I'm sure that Mr. Rand has nothing to hide about our work for you. I'll see if he's in his office."

The blonde manipulated some keys on an intercom system and whispered low into a speaker, her eyes still on them and hostile. Both agents smiled at her, and Illya pretended to look around with a critical expression. When the girl looked away to listen more carefully to her intercom, Illya touched Solo.

"Security isn't very tight, Napoleon."

"No. It looks like anyone can just walk in," Solo agreed.

"Could it be a wild goose chase?"

"Maybe. But where is Danton?"

Before Illya Kuryakin could answer this, the blonde receptionist turned to them again, all smiles now.

"Mr. Rand will see you. Straight down the center corridor, the last door on the left. You'll see Mr. Rand's name on the door."

They thanked her and began to walk. Their quick eyes noted the activity all around them. It seemed legitimate and normal. No one looked at them unduly and no one ignored them pointedly. They were observed and ignored in the exact combination and degree they would have expected for any visitors at a busy electronics plant.

"Could we be wrong?" Solo said.

"I expect we'll find out soon enough, Napoleon," Illya said. "There's the office. Keep your gun ready."

"I haven't taken my hand off it," Solo said.

Illya Kuryakin opened the door of the office marked: *Kevin Rand, President*. The two agents stepped in. Solo checked the corridor behind them. There were two young men in it who seemed to have no interest in them.

Illya surveyed the office.

It was a large office, as befitted the president of a company. There were four tall windows, shaded now at night. A large polished wood desk stood in front of the windows. There was a comfortable modern-Danish teak-and-upholstery couch, three matching chairs, and a coffee table. The tall swivel chair behind the desk was empty.

"He acts like a company president anyway," Solo said, indicating the empty chair. "Keep them waiting."

Illya said nothing. He was looking at the paneled walls. There was a door in each wall. Illya considered the doors.

"The one on the left probably leads to the next office," the small Russian U.N.C.L.E. agent said. "But where does that door on the right go? This is supposed to be the last office. The hall ends just outside."

Napoleon Solo looked at the door. "Maybe it goes into the plant."

"Suppose we take a look, Napoleon?" Illya said.

The small agent turned to walk toward the door on the right. Before he could take two steps the left hand door opened and a man stepped through. He smiled.

"So sorry, gentlemen. My apologies for keeping you waiting. I wanted to have some figures at hand," the man said, and waved a sheaf of papers.

Solo stared. He touched Illya as the two of them turned to face the man. It was the man who had been working the machine in the room above the hot room of the health club. The tanned, slender, grey-haired man his helpers had called Professor and Chief.

"You're staring at me, young man," the slender man said to Solo.

Illya positioned himself to cover the doors and drew his gun. Solo covered the grey-haired man with his pistol. The man looked at them both with an incredulous expression on his face.

"I gather you think you know me," the man said evenly, "and that you don't like me very much."

"Who are you?" Solo said.

"Who? Why, I assumed you had come to see me. I mean, my name is on the door."

"You are Kevin Rand?" Illya said.

"I certainly am, young man. What do you plan to do with those ridiculous pistols?"

The slender, grey-haired man stood firm and imperious in the office, but with a faint line of

amusement around his mouth. Illya glanced at Solo. Solo stared hard at the slender Kevin Rand.

"And you don't know me?" Solo said.

"From your appearance perhaps I should, but I really don't," Rand said.

"You didn't see me in the health club?"

"What health club, Mr.—What are your names? I gather that you are not two gentlemen from the defense department named Jones and Ivanov."

"Do you have a twin, Mr. Rand?" Illya said.

"Not that I know of," Rand snapped. "Exactly what is this all about?"

Solo stepped closer. "You claim that you were never in a New York health club. That you didn't get some top-secret data from a Colonel Forsyte by using a machine on him? That you didn't knock me out in the health club?"

Rand stared. "A machine that —what? Is this some kind of joke? Do I look like a man who could knock you out? Really, gentlemen, are you sure you feel quite all right?"

Solo spoke carefully as he watched Rand. Illya still covered all the doors.

"I saw you, Rand. I saw the machine and you operating it. I heard you talk about Forsyte."

Rand blinked, and then he nodded. "Did you now? Well, that puts a different look on it all, doesn't it?"

"I'd say it does," Solo said. "Now—"

Rand smiled. "Yes, well I had to be sure what you did know, didn't I? Get them!!"

Solo and Illya both whirled to the windows behind them. There was nothing there. Instantly they turned back.

Rand was gone.

"We fell for the oldest—" Illya began.

There was a sudden hissing sound.

Clouds of vapor, gas, poured into the office from vents in the ceiling.

"The windows!" Solo shouted.

They ran for the windows and tore down shades.

There were no windows.

Where the windows should have been, where the shades covered, was nothing but blank wall with window sills nailed on!

"A trap," Solo cried.

"And we—" Illya began.

Neither of them spoke again as they suddenly collapsed. The only sound in the room was the hiss of the gas.

FOUR

THEY REVIVED side by side in a large bare room with bright hanging lights. Faces stared down at them. In the center of the ring of faces they saw the smiling face

of the slender, grey-haired man—Rand.

"So, gentlemen, you're awake. I was afraid for a moment that our little sleeping potion had been too much. That would have been too bad."

They blinked and looked around. They were seated on a couch along the wall of the large bare room. They were not tied, but men in white smocks held guns and stood all around. The room itself looked like a warehouse. Boxes of electronic parts were stacked everywhere.

"Yes," Rand said, "you are in our warehouse. It is quite safe and remote. You are my guests. The men with guns are only a precaution in case you preferred not to be my guests. Now, perhaps we can get down to business. Who are you, and who do you represent?"

"Represent?" Illya Kuryakin said. The small Russian moved his arms and legs to be sure that he was all right and not held by some device such as THRUSH's special chair.

"Of course," Rand said. "And never mind telling me, that is a childish tactic on my part. You are Mr. Illya Kuryakin and Mr. Napoleon Solo of an organization called, I believe, U.N.C.L.E. And you are interested in my little brain child here, eh?"

They looked toward where Rand pointed. The macabre machine stood there in the shadows of the vast room. A row of tables and desks stood in front of it, which was why the two agents had not noticed it at once. Rand watched their faces.

"I see you are interested," the slender man said.

"We're interested," Solo said. "Are you interested in destroying the machine?"

"Destroy?" Rand cried. "My brain child? Really, Mr. Solo, that is a poor joke. You have seen it work, you said? Surely you would not want to destroy such a marvel of the electronic art? Do you have any idea what it can really do, gentlemen?"

The eyes of the grey-haired man seemed to blaze for a moment at the thought of the marvels of his machine. "Beautiful! Sheer magic to think about. Imagine, gentlemen, to read the mind at any time in any place. Ah, who would dare destroy such a wonder?!"

"If it can do what you say," Illya said quietly.

Rand bridled. "If? You say if? Mr. Solo has seen what the Mind-Sweeper can do! That's what we call it, by the way. A rather clever name, I think. Our little mental vacuum cleaner, you might say. The Mind-Sweeper! It will revolutionize the world! Do you hear? And it is mine!"

"I took you for more of a businessman," Solo said.

Rand cocked an eyebrow. "You

did, eh? Very shrewd. Yes, I am a businessman. But I am also an electronics expert. I quite admit that the Sweeper is not precisely my development, but it is my creation. And you wonder if it can do what I say it can do?"

Rand looked at Napoleon Solo. "Mr. Solo has seen. You know that Forsyte came to the health club, and you know that he left his secrets there. A man above reproach. A man no pressure could have forced to reveal a word of what he knew—stripped of all his secrets within minutes!"

The grey-haired electronics man smiled at them. "I think you know much more, also. You know of my tests with the machine in London and in Ottawa. Successful tests. Naturally, we have moved the machine, to be certain we would not be caught while we were perfecting it. But you know of its successes in London, Ottawa, and now New York. We have now finished testing, and will soon market our little Sweeper, eh?"

Illya blinked. "You plan to sell the machine?"

"Why not? As you have said, I am a businessman. Think of the potential! Not a single nation could afford to be without a Mind-Sweeper. Not only does it sweep the secrets from the brain of anyone, but it does so without them knowing it at all. Provided it is properly operated. Imagine—it takes the most secret data, and the subject never knows the machine has been working on his brain."

"Not always," Solo said.

"What?"

Solo grinned. "You used it on a man this morning, and he knew it."

Rand waved an angry hand. "A mistake. The idiots I left with to work it on the outer-space defense data made a small error. The man could have known no more than that he was a trifle dizzier than normal."

"It was enough," Illya said. "It will probably finish you."

Rand laughed. "I doubt it, Mr. Kuryakin. It is, however, one of the reasons we decided to end our tests and move now. No, I doubt if we will be found now."

"If it can make one mistake, it can make more," Solo said.

There was a silence in the vast room. Illya and Solo looked at Rand, but they were also studying the warehouse for possible escape. In addition to the armed men around them, there seemed to be another group in a far distant corner. Doors opened off the warehouse at the loading end, and other doors were in the inner wall that joined the production building. All the doors were closed and locked as far as they could see.

Rand had stopped smiling. "No, there will be no more mistakes. You see, gentlemen, this is our prototype model. It is the only ma-

chine at the moment. I admit that it is not a simple machine; it took years to build and perfect. It has flaws. But the man who really invented the machine, our Dr. Heimat, is even now about to complete his work on the production models. I assure you, gentlemen, that the production models will have no flaws, and will be much simpler to produce. I may not be the research genius Dr. Heimat is, but I am a production genius. That, after all, is the true genius of America, isn't it?"

Rand smiled and touched the grotesque machine lovingly. "Production, and perfecting what is only a raw idea," he said as if to himself. "That is the true American genius. Soon my Mind-Sweeper will be produced in mass production. Now it can absorb only what a man has held in his mind for a week, but soon it will absorb a month, six months, a year, and finally all that a man has learned since his birth! The power! The power!"

Rand's voice rose and echoed through the vast warehouse. All the men in the room looked toward Rand. His booming, half-insane voice carried like a wave through the room and reverberated back from all the walls. In the silence that followed no one moved. At last Rand blinked, sighed.

"So, I get carried away. It is the beauty of the universe, gentlemen, a perfect piece of electronic machinery. But let us talk more, eh? You asked if I am going to sell the Mind-Sweeper. That will depend on the offer, the problems, and the price. At the moment I'm also considering a lease-deal, you know. Lease it to all the countries, but keep the primary secrets to ourselves—with a proper destruct in case anyone attempted to take it apart. Not that anyone could—Heimat's basic secret is a theory no one else knows, not even me."

Rand smiled at them. "Of course, I'm also considering the idea of going into the spy business ourselves. In the long run that might be the best. What do you gentlemen think?"

They said nothing.

Rand continued to smile. "Perhaps you would care to make an offer on behalf of U.N.C.L.E.? A large enough offer might induce me to sell it, and Dr. Heimat, to you. After all, I am a businessman, and a businessman is in business to sell."

Rand watched them both like a small, bright-eyed bird. They still said nothing. They were both thinking of how they could stop this man, who was obviously partly insane. Rand touched his machine again. Only then did they notice that the machine was operating! Rand read a piece of printed tape from the computer section of the weird instrument.

"No, gentlemen, I am not in-

sane, not even partly," Rand said, and looked straight at them. "You see? The machine does work. I have just read your thoughts. Now will you make an offer? And make it good. I already have one very good offer, don't I, Mr. Danton?"

With these last words, Rand raised his voice.

Across the room, in the middle of the other group of armed men, Emil Danton stood up and stared straight at Illya and Solo.

FIVE

RAND LAUGHED aloud. "Mr. Danton came before you, my young friends, and on a similar errand. I'm afraid he was no smarter than you two. You see, it was simple to know what you had on your minds—my little Mind Sweeper has a coaxial link to the lobby. You were all under mind-reading the instant you entered! Another example of what my beauty can do. Once I knew what you had in mind, it was child's play to capture you."

Rand made an abrupt nod of his head. The armed men across the room brought Emil Danton to stand beside Illya and Solo. The elegant THRUSH leader had lost little of his self-assurance, and showed not the slightest mark of violence on his immaculate clothes. Danton shrugged slightly as he looked at the two agents.

"I see you fell into the same trap, my friends," Danton said. "I must say you show remarkable abilities to escape, but not very good ability to remain uncaught again. Out of the frying pan and into the fire, eh?"

"Hello, Danton," Solo said. "You seem to be pretty much in the same fire."

"Me, Napoleon? Hardly. I'm just another good businessman out to make a deal with Mr. Rand. That is a truly fine machine he has," Danton said. "All I have to do is convince Mr. Rand of the advantages of selling to me, or teaming with us."

"Rand is insane," Illya said drily, "but I doubt if he is insane enough to trust THRUSH."

Danton laughed aloud. The elegant THRUSH council member was completely relaxed, or giving a good imitation. With Danton it

was hard to be sure. Now the immaculate THRUSH leader took out a cigar case, selected a cigar, snipped the end with silver cigar-scissors, lighted the cigar, and began to puff contentedly. Rand watched him.

"Mr. Danton has made a substantial offer on the part of his, er, company," Rand said. "I have heard of his organization, and I have no illusions, but the offer is very attractive. Unless you gentlemen can think of a better offer—"

"No offer made by THRUSH is worth anything," Solo said sharply. "Once they have your machine they will have no use for you, and I doubt if you will get much use out of their money."

Danton shrugged. "Why, Napoleon, you hurt me."

Illya looked at Rand. "You must know that you can't trust THRUSH. I doubt if they have any intention of buying your machine, at any price. Danton is playing for time."

"And what are you doing, Kuryakin?" Danton snapped.

Rand held up his hands. "Gentlemen, gentlemen. We'll conduct this like businessmen. There is no need for these personal attacks. What I have is a simple business matter. I have a machine. I may wish to sell it. You are all interested in it. I'm not even sure that I care what you do with it after you buy it. If U.N.C.L.E. makes a really good offer, I will consider it, even if you mean to destroy the machine."

Danton went pale. "Destroy? Such a machine? No, Rand, that would be a crime! U.N.C.L.E. won't buy your machine! They are fools! Narrow-minded policemen! They would take the machine and then arrest you and lock you up as insane. Your Dr. Heimat, too. Don't listen to them, no matter what they say!"

Illya and Solo glanced at each other. Their eyes showed the same thought. It was Solo who put it into words.

"I think we might consider buying the machine. If we had absolute proof that it was the only model, and you sold Dr. Heimat with it," Solo said. He looked at Danton. "Under the circumstances I think U.N.C.L.E. might possibly top any bid THRUSH could make."

Rand nodded. "Good, that is the way I like to do business. What figure did you have in mind? Perhaps we can have a bidding session right now."

"Fine," Solo said. "Of course, I'll have to contact my headquarters to get the authorization. A mere formality, you understand. I imagine Danton will have to do the same."

Rand turned to Danton. "Will you?"

"Of course not," Danton snapped. "And can't you see what they're doing?"

"How will you contact your office?" Rand said.

"By radio," Solo said.

"I see," Rand said, and suddenly smiled again. "That is all I had to know, gentlemen. It seems that Mr. Danton is right. You have the minds of policemen. Too bad. An offer from U.N.C.L.E. would have been most interesting. But it is clear that all you want to do is contact your people and bring them here. Alas, I really thought that you were more clever."

"We would buy the machine," Illya said.

"Perhaps," Rand said, "but I cannot risk it, can I? No, I think U.N.C.L.E. is not a good organization to deal with. You are do-gooders, not businessmen. You wish to save the world, not to make money. I do not like people who think of others rather than their own interests."

Rand turned to Danton. "Now I think the THRUSH offer is legitimate and interesting. Of course, I have other offers already, and there are other factors. But I think we can talk, Mr. Danton."

"We can talk," Danton said. "What about them?"

The elegant THRUSH leader indicated Illya and Solo.

Rand shrugged. "We will probably have to kill them. But for now I think we will simply hold them. Who knows, Mr. Danton? I might just throw them into a deal and hand them to you as a sort of bonus."

"That would be most useful," Danton said.

Rand laughed. "Take them out and lock them up downstairs."

The armed men prodded Illya and Solo to their feet. Moments later they were marched out of the warehouse through an interior door and behind them they heard Danton laughing with Rand.

The machine itself stood silent in the vast warehouse.

ACT IV

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN KILL YOU.

FOR THE FOURTH time in twenty-four hours or less, Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo were marched away under guard. The four white-smocked armed men herded them along a narrow and dark corridor that slanted down beneath the electronics factory.

After a few minutes the corridor flattened out and rows of heavy doors began to appear along the walls. Some of the doors were open, and the two agents saw men busy in laboratories. Soon they passed a series of doors that all opened into one room—a small factory inside the room, where men worked feverishly assembling parts into what looked like other models of the deadly Mind-Sweeper.

"A secret factory under the regular plant," Solo said.

"It had to be something like that, Napoleon," Illya said.

One of the armed men hissed, "Shut up! No talking, you two!"

They marched on. The four guards walked behind, two abreast in the narrow corridor. They reached a darker section where all the doors were closed. Ramps led up along side passages to what were obviously loading areas. They were clearly now in a storage area.

"Do you think we have one chance?" Illya said. "Or five?"

"Two-out-of-six," Solo said.

"I said shut up!" the white-smocked guard cried.

But Illya and Solo had given their signals. The guards, uneasy at the calm talk of their prisoners, moved closer. Illya and Solo waited.

"Stop," the chief of the guards said.

They stopped.

"Open the door," the head guard said to two of his men.

Two of the guards stepped to the massive steel door and opened it. The two went into the room and turned with their guns ready.

"Inside," the head guard said to Illya and Solo.

Illya stepped in first. Solo followed behind. Suddenly Illya gave a hoarse cry.

"Why wait! We'll never get out! I can't stand it!"

With a quick motion of his hand the small Russian seemed to pick a button off his suit and thrust it into his mouth, biting down hard.

Illya screamed, choked, and pitched forward to the floor, exactly in the doorway.

"Poison!" a guard shouted.

"Stand back!" the head guard snapped to Solo.

Solo backed out into the corridor. Two of the guards bent over Illya. The other two guards stared at the fallen figure of the Russian. They all talked at once.

"He's dead!"

"One of his buttons! Who searched him?"

"Rand'll be mad as hell."

"Open his collar!"

"Get a doc—"

The last speaker never finished. One of the guards bending over Illya laid down his pistol. Solo was now behind all four, for a split second forgotten.

With a motion so fast no one saw it, Illya Kuryakin raised up. In the same motion he stabbed the guard with a long, thin steel needle—the needle from beneath the fake scar on his leg.

The man, stabbed to the heart, dropped with a low scream. Illya grabbed the gun of the second guard.

Solo jumped on to the backs of the other two. One of them went down. The other turned to shoot Napoleon Solo. Illya clubbed this

one with the butt of the gun he had picked up.

An instant later the two agents stood with guns levelled on the other two guards. Both guards raised their hands in fear as they looked down at their fallen comrades.

"Not a sound!" Illya hissed.

The two terrified guards nodded. Quickly the two agents stripped clothes and belts from all four men and bound and gagged them tightly. Then they put them inside the door and locked it with keys they had found on the leader's belt.

"They'll keep," Solo said.

They listened in the dark corridor. But any sounds that might have been heard had been covered by the noise of machinery in the underground factory. No one had heard anything.

"All right. Now let's see what Rand and Danton are talking about," Solo said. "Put on a white smock. It might help."

"And this time let's try to stay free," Illya said.

"I'm not worried about us," Solo said, "I'm worried about that machine. In THRUSH's hands?"

"It won't be," Illya said.

Solo nodded and led the silent way back along the underground passages. They reached the area of the large factory room and peered in through the open doors. The men at work were all busy with their tasks. One or two looked up to see the white-smocked men pass by, and returned to their work unconcerned. Laboratory workers were always passing.

They moved faster through the section where the doors stood open into laboratories. Once a man called to them, but they mumbled the name of Rand and passed on. The man, probably some supervisor, did not come after them.

At last they reached the ramp upward. They held their heads down and went up toward the warehouse level. Twice men passed them, but did not stop. They reached the door through which they had been taken, and Illya listened with his ear against the door.

"What do you hear?" Solo said.

"Rand and Danton, quite a way off. I don't hear anything else," Illya said.

"We could walk right into a

hornet's nest," Solo said. "This time we've got to get that machine first."

"More than that, Napoleon. We can't just destroy the machine; we've got to find out who has the outer-space defense system data, too."

"That means we've got to get Rand alive," Solo agreed.

Illya suddenly looked along the corridor.

"Someone's coming, Napoleon!"

The two agents looked around for cover. There was no cover. Not even a door or a closet. At the far end of the corridor, in the opposite direction from the ramp that led down to the hidden underground factory, two men suddenly appeared. They were both wearing the same white laboratory smocks—and each carried a tray.

"Quick, Illya!" Solo whispered, and began to walk openly straight toward the two men with the trays.

Illya followed Solo. They walked boldly along straight toward the approaching men. As they got closer they saw that there were sandwiches on one tray and a bottle of whisky, water, soda and glasses on the other tray. When they were only a few feet in front of the two men, one of the men suddenly spoke.

"You got Rand's pickle? He got to have a pickle."

"I got it."

The other one nodded, and they brushed past Illya and Solo without looking at them. Solo nodded to Illya; the two men were bringing food and drink to Rand and Danton inside the large warehouse room.

As they passed, Illya and Solo wheeled, struck each man on the back of the neck with single karate chops, and caught the trays before they could fall, all in a single deft motion.

They placed the trays down and dragged the two men along the silent corridor until at last they found a closet. They bound and gagged these two also, in their own clothes, and ran back to the trays. Trays in hand, they approached the door to the warehouse room.

They tried the door. It was open. They went in, carrying their trays.

TWO

AT A DESK in front of the Mind-Sweeper machine, Kevin Rand and Emil Danton sat and talked. Only three armed men were still in the room with them. The warehouse was very quiet, and the banks of lights had been turned off until the only light was where Danton and Rand were conferring.

"I've told you my offer," Danton said. "Ten million dollars, in American dollars and all cash, for

the machine, the factory and Heimat. You can throw in Solo and Kuryakin, too. You don't need them."

Rand smoked a cigar and considered. The slender grey-haired business man's eyes were bright and wary as he watched Danton. He waved his cigar, smoke eddying around his head.

"It is attractive. But far too little. Consider how much I could get by leasing the equipment once I have enough units, which will be soon. Why, I'd get ten million a year per machine."

Danton shook his head. "Nowhere near. After all, the machine is only a help, a convenience. I admit it could be a big help, but there are other ways of getting the data."

"Not so safely—and not without anyone ever knowing," Rand said. "That is my major selling point, Danton: the machine takes the information without essentially harming the subject, and without him being aware of a thing. You know yourself that one of the major problems of espionage is that information ceases to be of great value the instant someone knows you have stolen it."

"Granted, of course," Danton said, and frowned. "All right, I think we'll go fifty million for the whole shooting match. Cash."

"Hardly a scratch, Mr. Danton. What do you say to, say, five billion? American dollars, cash."

"Ridiculous!"

Rand shrugged. "I'm sure I could net that in a few years by a lease arrangement."

Danton bit his lip and glanced at the silent machine that stood like some malignant god in the room. "Think of the overhead, Rand. You might gross a billion over a number of years, but you won't come near netting it. You'd have to have a large, very strong, organization. You'd be a marked group. U.N.C.L.E., Interpol, half the police of the world would be after you. You'd need not only an enormous sales and contact staff, but heavy security as well. Then think of the risk? They'd be out to smash you from the start. Now we already have the organization, and the manpower, and we know how to handle the risks."

"I don't know," Rand said with a smile. "Ten million a year per machine will pay for a lot of protection."

"And cost most of the ten million per machine. Besides, you don't have the know-how to be sure everyone will pay. THRUSH has the know-how. They fear us, and fear is all that keeps governments in line, believe me. All right, one billion cold cash—tomorrow."

Rand made a tent of his fingers, contemplated. "One billion, eh? That's quite a jump. I wonder how high you fellows at THRUSH will really go?"

"One billion. That's it," Danton snapped.

Before Rand could answer through his smile, the two men stopped talking as two waiters in white smocks entered. The three guards still in the room stepped to the waiters and took the trays. Rand and Danton did not even glance at the waiters. They were too intent on watching each other in their strange and deadly game with the malignant machine hovering over the whole vast and shadowed warehouse room.

The two guards carried the trays to the desk. Rand glanced at the trays.

"Ah, here is our food and drink. Sandwich?"

"I'm not hungry," Danton snapped. "What about it, Rand? One billion. A fair offer."

"A drink, then?" Rand said.

"Scotch, no ice," Danton said. "I want an answer."

Rand busied himself making the two drinks. The guards went away at a small wave of his hand. The two waiters seemed to have left. Rand handed a drink to Danton, leaned back and began to munch on a sandwich.

"I'm sure you want an answer," Rand said. "But there is much I have to consider. I have other offers, you know."

"None to match ours. I know that, too."

"Perhaps, but there is still the idea of going into the spy business ourselves," Rand said. "You know, the interest you and U.N.C.L.E. and Interpol have shown is most illuminating. I am beginning to think that the greatest rewards of money and power lie in using the machine ourselves."

"We'd break you!" Danton said angrily.

"Would you now?" Rand said. "I suppose you would."

"Don't even think about it, believe me," Danton said. "Now I've made a firm offer. One billion for it all. Take it or leave it."

Suddenly Rand began to laugh. The slender, grey-haired man shook with laughter, and tears streamed down his cheeks. He reached up and mopped at his eyes. He looked straight at Danton. The THRUSH chief watched Rand with a confused expression on his face.

"No deal," Rand laughed. "You don't really think I would trust THRUSH, do you? My dear Danton, you are no better than U.N.C.L.E. You are also playing for time. You have no intention of making a deal. Once I agreed, you would bring your army and take my Mind-Sweeper. I am not a fool!"

Danton protested. "I assure you—"

"Stop it, Danton! I know THRUSH. You would never honor such a deal. But I wanted to see how high you would suggest. It

gives me a good estimate of the real power of my little beauty. No, I will not deal with you. I will operate myself. I have the first really big piece of data to sell already, the outer-space defense system of the United States. I believe I know where I can sell that for ten million alone."

"Why, you stupid—" Danton exploded.

Rand waved a peremptory hand toward the three guards. They came running, guns at ready.

"Take Mr. Danton away," Rand snapped.

Danton paled. "You'll regret this, Rand!"

Rand looked at him coldly. "Not as much as you will. Take him to a cell with his friends. We will shoot them later! Perhaps THRUSH will pay for him."

Protesting, Danton was led toward the door. The guards handled him roughly. Two of them took him out. The third guard remained in the room. Rand sat at his desk, lost in thought. His eyes wandered toward the Mind-Sweeper machine, and he began to smile.

In the corridor outside the warehouse there was sudden noise. Men were running. The door burst open and three guards came in. Rand turned abruptly to face them.

"They escaped!" one of the guards cried.

Rand snapped, "Who escaped, you fool? Danton?"

"No, the two U.N.C.L.E. men. They're gone. We went to relieve the guards and we found them, the guards, locked in the room! The U.N.C.L.E. men overpowered them!"

Rand blinked. "Overpowered? Two against four with guns!? Do I have nothing but idiots here?"

The guards reddened. Rand watched them.

"No sign of them?"

"No, sir."

Rand nodded. "All right. They probably went out one of the loading ramps. Find them! They can't have gone far. Search the factory, just in case, and then search the countryside."

"Yes sir."

"Wait!" Rand said as the guards all turned to go. "In case they have escaped, institute Plan F. Immediately. We have no more reason to stay here anyway. You understand? Plan F. And notify Dr. Heimat below."

"Yes sir. Plan F. At once."

The guards all turned and ran from the room. Rand sat in the silence that descended and frowned. He looked again at his Mind-Sweeper machine. That made him smile again. He stared at the machine like a father looking at a beautiful daughter.

"So, now we are about ready, my beauty," the slender, grey-haired man said out loud. "We

will make history, you and I, eh? Heimat has you almost perfected; you will soon have brothers and sisters." Rand laughed a high, insane laugh. "Yes, you and I will have power. Power and wealth. Who knows how far we will take each other?"

"Not too far, Rand," a voice said.

Rand whirled, his made eyes searching the shadows of the room.

Then he saw the figure in the white smock. There was a gun in the man's hand, and it was trained on Rand. The man stepped out of the shadows.

"Solo!" Rand breathed.

THREE

NAPOLEON SOLO smiled as he moved slowly and carefully toward the slender, grey-haired electronics man.

Solo and Illya had never left the room, but had blended into the shadows and had overheard the last part of the talk between Rand and Danton. They had lurked, waited, until Rand was alone in the room. Now Solo stepped out with his gun ready.

"Don't try anything, Rand," Solo said quietly.

Rand stared at the gun. "I have no desire to die, Mr. Solo. But what do you think you can do? My men have this place locked up. You can't escape."

"Neither can you," Solo said.

Rand did not flinch. "You plan to kill me?"

"If we have to."

"And destroy the machine?"

Solo nodded grimly. "And destroy the machine."

"You'll never survive," Rand said coldly.

"Maybe not, but you and the machine will go first."

Rand sneered. "What good will that do you? My men will still be here. Dr. Heimat will duplicate the machine. Don't be a fool, Solo. Destroy the machine and me and you throw away a fortune. You throw away the power to rule the world! Think of it!"

"I'm thinking of it," Solo said.

"Then join us! That's an offer. Leave U.N.C.L.E. and join with me. I can use your brains. Danton is right about one thing—there'll be a big risk, and I'll need an organization. You can be chief of our security organization. Think of it, Solo! Infinite money! Infinite power! Control of all the minds!"

"I can sometimes barely control my own mind," Solo said quietly. "Now, if you want to get out alive, I think you better call Dr. Heimat and get him up here."

Rand laughed. "Don't be a fool. You'll get nothing from me! You can't escape!"

"Illya," Solo said.

Rand blinked. He watched Solo and saw that the agent was looking over his own, Rand's, shoulder

as he spoke. Rand turned to look behind him. His tanned face went bloodless.

Illya Kuryakin stood at the Mind-Sweeper machine. The small blond agent had his hands on switches. Kevin Rand tried to bluster.

"What do you think to do with the machine, Kuryakin?"

"Use it," Illya said quietly.

Rand sneered. "You think that you—"

"I am a trained electronics engineer, Rand," Illya said. "The machine is not too difficult. I don't expect any trouble. I suggest you relax."

Rand watched Illya. He glanced at Solo behind him. Then he made a desperate attempt. He bent, and came up from the desk with a pistol.

Solo leaped, kicked, and the pistol went sailing across the room.

The Mind-Sweeper began to hum. The tape spools turned. The lights began to flash. As the machine hummed, its probe was aimed directly at Rand. For an instant the slender man sat rigid. Then he began to blink, rub at his eyes, smile.

The machine hummed on, and Rand slowly began to nod where he sat. His arms dropped limp. Then he seemed to sleep.

Solo walked to the machine where Illya manipulated dials and switches. The computer section

had begun to hum. Illya nodded at the machine.

"It really is a beautiful machine, Napoleon," Illya said. "It scans the brain, absorbs the data, records it on tape, and then feeds the tape into the small computer. In the computer the data is coded, and printed on a paper-tape read-

out. The read-out tape can be stored, or it can be set for immediate read-out."

"Is it set?" Solo asked.

"Yes," Illya said. "We should know what is on Mr. Rand's mind any second."

The two agents bent over the tape. Solo watched the main door from time to time. The read-out tape began to come out of the machine. Illya Kuryakin studied it closely.

"This is the only model, but others are almost ready," Illya said. "They are all down in the factory we saw. This is Rand's only production center now."

The tape clicked on as the machine hummed and Rand sat slumped in his desk chair.

"He plans to operate the machines himself once he has ten models, and blackmail the whole world if he can," Illya read.

Rand squirmed in his chair, muttered, like a man in the throes of a bad dream.

Illya Kuryakin read, "Heimat is the only man who really can build the machine, and Rand himself can almost do it. Heimat's office is extension two thousand-seven-hundred and seventy, the code signal to make him come fast is the use of the words, 'There is no rush.' Heimat is a former Nazi scientist."

Solo held up his hand. Illya looked up. Far off, somewhere, there was a sound like gunfire. The two agents looked at each other in the silent warehouse.

"It sounds like they think they've found us," Solo said. "Can you hurry that up?"

Illya read again. "Here it is! The outer-space defense system data is here in the machine memory banks, and Rand has it in his desk, but that's all!" Illya looked up. "Only the machine and Rand himself has the details. He has not passed it on yet."

"So all we need is Rand and the machine," Solo said.

"And Heimat," Illya said.

"Right. Let's get him up here," Solo said. "And fast. Someone will be coming in soon."

"Call Heimat imitating Rand's voice," Illya said.

Solo nodded and went to the desk where Rand still sat in a kind of drugged sleep, a smile on his face now as if all his evil thoughts had been taken and left him peaceful. Solo picked up the inter-office telephone.

Illya continued to read the read-out tape of the machine that hummed on in the silence of the vast warehouse.

Solo imitated Rand's voice. "Dr. Heimat, extension two-thousand, seven-hundred and seventy. Heimat? I'd like to talk to you, yes. No, there is no rush. That's correct. Right."

Solo hung up. "He should be here pretty soon."

"Very soon, I hope," Illya said,

his eyes still studying the read-out tape. "Plan F is—"

The distant shots suddenly sounded closer. Solo and Illya listened. Then there were hurrying footsteps in the corridor outside the warehouse. Solo jumped for the cover of a packing case. Illya crouched down behind the humming Mind-Sweeper, his pistol ready.

The door opened and a short, stocky man of sixty came hurrying into the vast room. The man had a full grey beard and the wild eyes of a fanatic. He saw Rand and walked rapidly toward the small executive.

"What the devil is it, Rand?" Heimat had a heavy German accent, and talked as he walked. "I have work. You have ordered Plan F, and you realize how much work that—"

Heimat stopped dead. His fanatic eyes bulged in his head. He saw the machine operating, and saw Rand slumped asleep in the desk chair. The small German whirled.

Solo stepped out. "That's far enough, Dr. Heimat."

Heimat turned away and saw Illya stand up behind the machine with the pistol leveled.

"Was machts du? Who are you? *Was wollen Sie hier?"*

"Just keep it low and simple, Doctor," Solo said.

Illya snapped an order in German. The stocky doctor paled, looked at Rand, looked around the silent room. Then he gulped.

"Polizei?"

"In a way we're police," Illya said. "Now keep it calm, and we'll all—"

In the corridor outside there were loud shots, screams, the running of many feet. Men cursed and sub-machineguns rattled. The running feet approached the door into the warehouse.

"Quick!" Illya cried.

Solo pushed Heimat ahead of him, toward a stack of heavy boxes along the far wall away from the main door. Illya shut off the machine and ran after Solo. The two agents and Heimat, jumped behind the boxes just as the door burst open and men in black uniforms rushed in, their guns covering the whole room.

Illya and Solo watched.

Emil Danton strode into the room. The elegant THRUSH leader looked at Rand and laughed.

"Hello, Rand. It looks like my deal."

FOUR

DANTON STOOD IN front of Kevin Rand. The slender electronics expert blinked his eyes and shook his head as if not quite sure where he was or what was happening. He blinked up at Danton and seemed puzzled.

"Danton?"

The THRUSH leader laughed.

"Myself. You made a mistake, Rand, as I told you you would. You see, my capture itself activated a device all THRUSH leaders carry. The device alerted my men outside to my capture and they called for help. We have an organization, as I tried to tell you. Now my men have your whole plant. I'm afraid quite a few of your men had to die. Too bad, but you should not have tangled with THRUSH. You're out of your depth, Rand."

"Danton?" Rand said. His eyes showed the battle going on in his brain to remember what was bothering him. He looked sharply at Danton. "But—but it wasn't you, no. It was—"

"You thought you had me, of course," Danton went on, "I tried to tell you that you were no match for THRUSH. Now I have your plant, and you. I will have the machine, and Heimat, and all your facilities. I have them, Rand."

Rand nodded, his full consciousness returned. "Yes, so I see. But—Solo and that Russian. Where are they?"

Danton brushed this off. "I don't care about them now. The important matter is that you defied THRUSH, and you lost. I could kill you. But I would rather use you. You're beaten, Rand, and the Mind-Sweeper belongs to THRUSH. But we can use you, too."

Rand nodded again. "Why not? I know when I'm beaten. THRUSH appears to be all you say it is. I see no reason why I shouldn't join with you. Provided the terms are satisfactory."

"No terms, Rand," Danton said harshly. "You're in no position to make terms. I'm offering you a chance to join us, no more than that. You can be useful to us."

Rand watched Danton. "Very well."

"A wise decision," Danton said, and smiled. "Now let's get the machine and Heimat out of here. I don't like this place—too exposed, and U.N.C.L.E. knows about it."

"Wait," Rand said. "I think I should be given a post of some authority in THRUSH, Danton, and for that I have something to give you."

"Give me?" Danton said.

Rand smiled. "Something quite important. Without it, you'll never leave this plant alive."

"What kind of a trick is this?" Danton snarled.

"No trick. I just need your word that I will have some rank in THRUSH."

"You want to die? If you have anything important to say, Rand, say it and without a deal."

Rand and Danton glared at each other. At last Rand sighed. He ran his thin fingers through his grey hair.

"Very well, an act of cooperation then. You see, I have to tell you that in my plan—"

Illya Kuryakin suddenly stood

up from behind his boxes and shot three times at Rand.

Rand screamed once, hit by all three shots. The slender man pitched forward on to his face and lay still in a pool of spreading blood.

The room erupted with shots. Danton screamed orders to shoot Illya and Solo.

"Get them! There, behind those boxes!"

Behind the boxes Napoleon Solo sat on Dr. Heimat and fired from the cover of the heavy boxes. Illya fired. From their cover they picked off the THRUSH men like sitting ducks.

"Take cover!" Danton roared.

All the THRUSH men dove for safety. Danton leaped behind a box. For a long and sudden minute all firing ceased as both sides crouched under cover.

Kevin Rand lay in his own blood between the two sides.

Danton peered over a box and called out.

"Come now, gentlemen, we have you outnumbered ten to one. You know you don't have a chance. Solo? Kuryakin?"

"Come and get us, Danton," Solo called out. Heimat squirmed under him. Solo grinned.

"We'll simply outflank you, Solo," Danton said.

"Go ahead," Solo called back.

"Do you think you know something I don't know?" Danton said.

"Come and see," Solo said.

He looked down at Heimat beneath him. Danton would not want to hurt Heimat. Illya Kuryakin was watching the hidden enemy.

"So?" Danton said. "Very well. We don't need you, do we? I suppose you have help on the way. It will do you no good. I have enough men in the plant. From where you are you can't cover the machine. My men will simply pin you down, and we will take the machine and go."

"What about Heimat?" Illya called.

There was a long silence. Danton crouched behind his box.

"I see," Danton said at last. "You have Heimat, eh? Well, I suppose we'll have to make a deal. What do you say . . ."

Behind the boxes Illya Kuryakin suddenly touched Napoleon Solo. "Down!"

Solo looked at the small Russian.

"Down, now!" Illya cried.

Solo dropped. He lay flat with his hands over his head. Illya lay beside him. Dr. Heimat did not even attempt to escape. Illya was looking at his watch.

Danton called. "Well? What deal would you—"

First the concrete floor seemed to rise up.

Then the roof beams buckled, sagged.

The earth seemed to rock like a ship at sea.

Then the explosion shook the entire building to its core.

Beams fell, the floor heaved, men were thrown everywhere.

Screams came from all through the plant outside the warehouse. Flames began to flicker at the windows.

Explosions and shock waves shuddered through the plant and the night.

The THRUSH men ran in confusion, screamed, shouted. Boxes tumbled onto men all through the warehouse. Debris showered down on Solo and Illya.

FIVE

BUT THERE HAD been no explosion in the warehouse.

The building shook and rocked and cracked but this was from the explosions in the other parts of the plant. Flames filled the night sky outside the warehouse, but in the warehouse itself there was no explosion or fire, only the results of near explosions, and the smoke of close fire.

Danton shouted. "It's a destruct! But not in here! Grab the machine! Quickly now!"

Chaos and confusion filled the warehouse. Illya and Solo stood up. They hauled Heimat to his feet. They began to move across the warehouse, their guns ready.

THRUSH men saw them. "There! U.N.C.L.E.!"

Illya and Solo shot, staggered on across the broken floor among the chaos of men and littered boxes.

"Forget them!" Danton screamed. "The machine! Get the machine out! Hurry! Watch them, but get the machine!"

Firing as they went, Illya and Solo moved toward the door through the smoke and confusion. The door was blocked by fallen beams. Illya and Solo turned toward the outer loading doors. Some of the heavy double doors stood shattered and open to the night that was bright with flame.

"The machine!" Danton shouted. "You fools, get the machine! Hurry"

With a curse, Danton ran to the machine himself. He grabbed other THRUSH men and forced them to take hold of the Mind-Sweeper. They worked like smoke-blackened demons around the malignant machine, bent, took hold, strained to raise it.

Illya and Solo ran with Heimat toward the open loading doors at the far end. Suddenly Heimat looked back and saw Danton give the order to lift the Mind-Sweeper.

The stocky German fell to the floor.

Illya and Solo bent to pick him up.

The explosion ripped through the warehouse itself.

The Mind-Sweeper, the THRUSH men lifting it, and Emil Danton

seemed to vanish in a sheet of flame.

One instant Danton was there with his arms out in an order to lift the Mind-Sweeper, and the next instant he was a shattered corpse in the twisted and broken metal of the exploded machine.

In the explosion, Illya and Solo were knocked flat. They lay stunned. All through the room—a shambles now—THRUSH men lay groaning on the floor.

Illya and Solo staggered up.

Heimat was gone.

"There!" Illya shouted.

Heimat was running some fifty yards ahead and almost at the doors out.

"He knew the machine would explode!" Illya cried.

"Come on!" Solo shouted.

"We've got to get him!" Illya cried.

They ran after the stocky German. They reached the doors and ran on out into the night. Heimat was still some fifty yards ahead running toward the woods. He turned and saw them gaining on him. He was an old man and they could easily outrun him.

Heimat turned and raced as fast as he could back toward the buildings of the plant that burned fiercely in the night.

"If he gets away we can still lose it all!" Solo panted as he ran.

"Head him off," Illya gasped.

They gained, but they were still some twenty-five yards behind the fleeing scientist when the ground suddenly rose up and seemed to enfold Heimat like a great mouth eating him. He rose into the air and for a long second his feet continued to move, his legs pumping madly as he ran on empty air.

Illya and Solo were flung down again.

The explosion tore up out of the bowels of the earth itself.

Heimat hung there, still trying to run suspended in mid-air, and then he fell screaming into the yawning pit of flames that came from below where the underground rooms had exploded in the final holocaust of the plant.

Illya and Solo lay where they were for a moment. Ten yards in front of them a great hole had opened in the ground and the flames licked up into the darkness.

They stood up, battered and bruised but unhurt.

They looked around them. Flames burned everywhere. The entire plant was a shattered hulk. But there were no more explosions.

The darkness was almost dead in its silence.

Only the small sound of flames, and the faint screams of the injured.

Dawn was beginning to break in the east.

SIX

ALEXANDER WAVERLY sat in his helicopter on the edge of the field. Police and firemen swarmed over the still blazing wreckage of the plant in the distance. A thin sun had just risen over the eastern edge of the world. Illya and Solo, patched and bandaged but still black with smoke and charred wood, stood in front of the U.N.C.L.E. helicopter.

"Well, it seems the affair is ended," Waverly said, "and quite satisfactorily. Good work, gentlemen."

"Thank you," Illya said.

Waverly rubbed his hands. "I'm afraid it is all gone. The machine, Rand, Heimat, the plans, all the facilities. We will never have the secret of the—*uh*—Mind-Sweeper. But perhaps that is just as well. Rand had a most complete de-

struct mechanism in the plant. I imagine he expected to be far away when it went off."

The three U.N.C.L.E. men looked away toward the ruin of the plant and the firemen picking hopelessly among the wreckage. Men with stretchers were still carrying away the few survivors of the plant personnel, Rand's gang, and THRUSH's small army. Solo looked at Illya.

"One thing I don't get, Illya," Solo said. "Why did you stand up and shoot Rand? They didn't even know we were there."

"Plan F," Illya said. "I read it on the tape read-out from the machine. Rand's mind told me what Plan F was. It was the destruct. It also booby-trapped the Mind-Sweeper."

"But—" Solo began.

"I knew the machine was booby-trapped. As soon as Plan F was activated, Napoleon, the machine could not be moved without exploding, except by Rand, who could disconnect the explosive device. I knew when he started to tell Danton something, that what he was going to tell Danton was that the machine could not be moved, and that the plant would blow up."

Waverly nodded. "I see. So you stopped Rand from telling Danton. Clever. By shooting Rand, you prevented Danton from knowing that the machine would explode."

Illya Kuryakin nodded. "I had no way of being sure that Napoleon and I would get out alive. So I had to prevent Danton from knowing that the machine would explode if he moved it. That way, even if we were dead, Danton would not get the machine."

Waverly sucked on his cold pipe and looked again at the shattered plant that seemed to glow in the sun.

"The Mind-Sweeper is destroyed, and we got Danton, too," Waverly said slowly, and smiled. "A very good piece of work, indeed. An excellent night's work. Naturally, we will make no report about this, or Forsyte, or any of them. They were not spies. And you're sure that the outer-space defense data is completely destroyed?"

"Only Kevin Rand and the machine had the data," Solo said.

"Excellent," Waverly said, and looked at the sun, clear and gold above the eastern horizon. "It looks like a nice day. I suggest you gentlemen take the rest of the day, and get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow, I think we have another small problem for you to tackle."

With a sigh, Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin climbed into the helicopter. Moments later it was on its way back to U.N.C.L.E. Headquarters.

The shattered ruin of Rand Electronics smoldered behind.

Silently, endlessly, the ghosts of once living men guarded their evil island. Was I mad—or were they calling me to join them?

DIMENSION OF MIND

by ROBERT EDMOND ALTER

THE SCUFFY old fishing boat looked as seaworthy as a corn crib. However, it was the best Ravic could do on short notice. The government launch was on the fritz and Cayenne's port captain was laid up with the gout.

Ravic was not inclined to hang around in the fetid tropical town waiting for both to mend. He hired the three ex-convicts to run him out to the *Iles du Salut* in their little boat.

When he looked back along the foam-churned wake Cayenne was already gone and he was staring at the towering, ragged majesty of French Guiana. It sweltered beneath the saffron sky, the fronds and heads of palms resting unmoved under the constant swoops and descents of vultures.

He was thankful to be out of the steaming, insect-ridden, garbage-strewn town. He faced seaward with a sense of relief. The three emaciated ex-convicts were watching him surreptitiously. Finally the oldest one, the one with no teeth, spoke.

"You understand, *monsieur,* that we will not set you on St. Joseph's shore? That you will have to take the little boat?"

"That's understood," Ravic said shortly. *Poor superstitious devils,* he thought. *They're actually afraid of the island.* Well, he supposed it was understandable. There were more than 200 ex-convicts living in Cayenne—human derelicts who had preferred to remain there when the penal colony was abolished in 1953.

"You have not explained, *monsieur,* exactly why you wish to go to St. Joseph," the ex-convict with the missing left hand said.

Ravic smiled indulgently. "Because of the rumors we've heard

regarding the so-called 'screams' on the island. Some Guiana fishermen reported them last month."

The three skinny men glanced at each other, then away.

Ravic dropped his smile. "Did any of you hear this screaming?"

The toothless one cleared his throat. *"Oui, monsieur,"* he said quietly. "All of us did."

"Look," Ravic said impatiently. "The bad name the penal colony bears has already been enough of a stigma on our government. And now these fantastic rumors about screaming certainly aren't helping the situation. What do you think causes the screams?"

"The ghost of Vramy," the toothless one muttered.

Ravic had boned up on Devil's Island history. He knew that Vramy had been a famous French murderer and escape artist. In the bad old days Vramy had spent over twenty years in solitary confinement on St. Joseph, establishing a record that would now never be beaten. He was a legend.

"That's absurd," Ravic said. "There are no such things as ghosts."

The toothless old man shrugged and turned back to the wheel. There was nothing more to be said.

The *Iles du Salut* were thirty miles from Cayenne. They humped together in a tight cluster, small, lonely islands. They had been uninhabited for over a decade. The little fishing boat skirted the first island, which the one-handed man said was Royale. Then he pointed to the second.

"Ile Diable," he said tonelessly. Devil's Island.

It didn't look like much. It had given the entire penal colony its infamous name, but actually it had never housed more than a handful of political prisoners at a time.

"You understand, *monsieur,* that we will not return until tomorrow," the toothless one called from the wheel. "You must then come out to us in the little boat."

Ravic nodded. His sleeping bag, flashlight and haversack of canned food were placed in the boat and then he got into it himself. He shoved off and started rowing, absently watching the fishing boat limp hurriedly toward the open sea. They weren't wasting any time about getting away from the *Iles du Salut.*

He knew he had made a mistake the moment he entered the jungle. An unrestrained decade gives tropical vegetation a free hand. He should have had the sense to fetch along a machete.

He had a bad half hour in the sweltering bush, where the sunslants hit down rarely through the gaps in the overhead greenery, and he emerged at last feeling somewhat like a man who had spent an unnerving day lost in a maze.

But he was all right now. The old stone compound wall was before him, broken and crumbling.

Five more minutes of bumbling over roots and ducking hanging vines brought him to the gate. He stepped into the compound yard.

There was something awesome about the lonely, decaying ruin. For an absurd moment he had the sensation that he could literally see the place disintegrate before his very eyes. A sea breeze whispered plaintively across the sun-struck yard and an old dried palm frond rustled. Ravic gave a start.

Retaining his flashlight, he lowered the pack and bag to the ground and wiped at his face. It was slick with sweat and burning hot. He rubbed at his eyes. They ached. It would be a fine time to come down with a spot of malaria, he thought.

Still he stood there, staring. The place bore the fascination of a monument erected to the tragic and dark history of man's inhumanity to man. He stepped up on a large flat stone and stopped to stare. The center of the rock floor was stained rust red.

"The guillotine was rigged here," he muttered.

He stepped down from the mute evil old stone and walked toward the cell blocks. The jungle was already inside the compound and was obviously winning; in some spots literally cracking the walls apart. He entered a cell block.

In its heyday St. Joseph was used to confine the incorrigible prisoners who were sent from St. Laurent on the mainland. It was no hotel. The cell block was a roofless enclosure. Each cell was six-by-six, with an iron door and six iron bars over the top. A central corridor ran between the cells and this passageway was roofed with a narrow catwalk which had allowed the pacing guards to look into the cells.

The light was poor in the clammy corridor, and the smell bad. Moldy smell—and something else: a sweetly sickening stench. Ravic had smelled it before, in the war.

Some of the cell doors were open, emitting blocky shafts of opaque sunlight into the fungus-peppered corridor. He started looking in them as he went along the hall. Each contained a wooden pallet and a seam-sprung slop bucket. They were cluttered with refuse and the bare walls bore traces of writings left by forgotten prisoners.

The farther he went the more powerful became the stench. Well, he would find a spot to establish himself for the night and then he'd go to work and locate that damned smell.

He went along the corridor. It was floored and roofed with concrete, walled with stone and the steel doors of the cells. At both ends, where the passage abruptly turned to conform to the general quadrilateral shape of the building, dusty, blind kerosene lamps hung in brackets.

He turned right and went on for another forty feet, the soles of his

boots slurring on the gritty concrete. Then he was face to face with a closed door labeled *Chef des Surveillants*. He shoved it open and stepped into the commandant's old office. A desk stood in the center of the room and it was being industriously destroyed by an army of termites.

Scowling his disgust, Ravic entered the commandant's private room. It was bare and appeared to be insect free. Also, the smell had not permeated this end of the building. Good. He would bunk here for the night. He returned to the yard and crossed the compound, going back to the guillotine stone for his gear.

The ground was bare. His pack and sleeping bag were gone.

AN ICE PICK of anxiety prickled Ravic's spine, and he gave an involuntary shiver. He wiped at his mouth and started across the yard.

He entered the administration building, went through it angrily, room by room. But it was empty. Nothing there but the heat and humidity working on the paint peeling walls. He entered another cell block.

This block had been the ultimate in solitary confinement. The cells were dark, steaming little cubicles barely larger than broom closets. Incorrigibles had been locked in these hell boxes for months on end. Vramy had endured here.

Panting with the heat, wringing wet with sweat, Ravic went back into the yard and stood in a state of frustrated bewilderment. The vacant windows of the administration building gawked at him stupidly. Then he caught the sickening stench from the roofless enclosure again.

He reentered the first block and started a systematic search of each cell. Most of the cell doors were shut but none of them were locked. One, however, was jammed in the frame by its own rust. It took an old iron bar from a ruined window to lever it open.

He half gagged as he stepped into the roofless cell. It was like all the others he had inspected that afternoon—with one startling exception.

A decaying corpse was on the refuse-littered floor.

A logical explanation for everything . . .

That's what he had told the toothless one. And he knew it was true. All right then. What was the logical explanation for this one? He hunkered down and reached a tentative hand toward the corpse's clothes. An irate cloud of fat black flies whirled up and speckled the air. He winced, swatting them away, hating them.

Maggots, he saw, were also busy. The puzzling thing of course was that the corpse was so recent. Only a matter of a week or two. What was he doing on this de-

serted island? Who was he and how had he come here and why? And why had he died in this cell?

Gingerly Ravic fished a wallet from the dead man's jacket. It contained a passport made out for Philip Goodman, American, Goodman's shot record, and also a permit to visit the old St. Laurent penal camps. Goodman, it seemed, had been a free-lance photographer and journalist.

Then it made sense. All of it. The screaming too.

Goodman had obviously come to Cayenne to write an article on Devil's Island. But the Gendarmerie, fearing adverse publicity, had refused to issue him a pass to the *Iles du Salut*. So Goodman had rented a boat and made the voyage on the sly.

"Yes," Ravic muttered. "And somehow he became trapped in this cell. The wind probably. The wind slammed the door on him."

And then, realizing that he was going to starve to death in there, Goodman had started to scream.

It was all so simple, really. Tragic, yes; but simple. Ravic stood up, looking around. In one corner, near the cell door, a white mound of powdered cement heaped. He glanced upward at the overhead bars. Yes, in his desperation Goodman had tried to loosen the corner bar. But he simply hadn't had enough time. Starvation had caught him too soon.

The usual old scurrilous scribblings were on the walls. Only one of them caught Ravic's eye. It was just above the wooden pallet and it said: *L'Enfer.*

"Hell indeed," Ravic said. He left the tragic cell.

Still, it didn't explain his missing pack and sleeping bag.

He searched the remainder of the block, cell by cell, turning up nothing of interest. Then he went out in the yard and walked down to a rusty tin-roofed building that was set apart from the rest of the prison. It was the Crazy House.

Many of the prisoners used to go mad from being confined in their black broom closets and in their roofless cells, with the tropic sun or the torrential rains pouring down on them. Then they were removed from their cubicles and placed in the isolated Crazy House, where they could scream and rave without driving everyone else on the island insane.

Standing there in the hushed hot gloom of the Crazy House, staring at the old rusty shackles and other restraining devices, Ravic became aware of a peculiar uneasiness, an indescribable malaise. He was not able to explain or analyze this unhealthy feeling of disquiet, but he sensed that he was suffering something which was very near the pangs of spiritual dissolution.

What on earth had happened to his pack and bag? Who could explain that logically? And was it really the breeze that had slammed the cell door on Goodman?

"Of course," he said. "What else?"

He went back into the boiling yard. There was no breeze now, only a sweltering heat. His brow was burning again and he was having trouble with the focus of his eyes. Should have brought sun glasses, he thought. He started disconsolately toward the roofless cell block.

His discomfort rapidly increased. He was conscious of an odd sinking at his heart and of a strange moral disturbance which was very difficult to describe. Impossible to describe.

Down the sky darkness fell, abruptly, slaking a little the heat that had lain upon the land and the windless sea. Wearily Ravic entered the commandant's quarters and stretched out on the floor. His stomach was empty but the thought of eating was repugnant. How could anyone eat hot solid food in an appalling climate like this?

Yet the luckless convicts used to eat boiled rice and lukewarm soup twice a day, week in, month out, year after year after—

In the tropical timelessness of night he dreamed of them. He heard the hobnailed boots clunking in the corridor outside. Guards called out, and there was the sour smell of onion soup, the clatter of slop buckets being passed and repassed through the apertures in the cell doors. And there was the buzzing of flies frantically trying to settle down upon the pannikins of soup, and the endless, endless screaming of the mad . . .

He woke with a start. Something was crawling up his bare left forearm. A hand, he thought. Lord in heaven, he could feel the fingertips! It was moving slowly toward his elbow.

He was too frightened to move. The room he was in was as black as India ink. He couldn't see, but he could *feel* the hand on his arm; definitely feel it, and he knew this was not a part of his dream. Stark reality.

Cautiously, his right hand went creeping around for the flashlight. He found it, raised it, snapped the button and put the leaping halo of light full on a four-inch vampire bat.

The carnivorous thing was hunched on his bare arm, its triple-jointed fingers clutching his skin,

and its trenchant upper incisors were busy feeding its exclusive blood diet.

Ravic yelled and swung the flashlight and the bat took off in its peculiar erratic pattern of flight, its wings clicking disjointedly. It flut-a-fluttered through the open window and vanished in the purple moonlight.

In a quiver of loathing and fear Ravic turned the light on his arm. The bat had punctured him twice, and the dread of blood poisoning obsessed him. Filthy damned thing!

He was suddenly aware of the wind, cold and forceful, wailing out of the sea and over the jungle and through the ruined compound. And he heard the appalling sound that accompanied the wind . . .

A scream. A mortal cry of anguish.

THE CORRIDOR OF the roofless cell block was whining with a spasmotic wind. Some of the rusty iron doors seemed to lurch toward him in the crystalline glare of his torch. The scream ripped through the troubled fabric of the night again.

Trembling, Ravic passed his free hand over his moist face.

It's the wind, he told himself. *Nothing but the wind. It's pushing one of the iron doors or windows or a loose piece of a tin roof. Making it scream like that. Name of God, it has to be the wind!* Even so, he stumbled down to Goodman's cell, just to be certain.

He didn't really want to enter that place. It was silly but there it was. He felt that he was in some sort of Gothic horror. The wind died out with a mutter and a weird hush fell over the cell block. The silence grew, like a dumb monster watching solemnly along the corridor.

Ravic shivered. He struck the edge of a door with the flashlight, just to hear a noise, but even that sound seemed smothered.

"I'm being absurd," he murmured. He entered the cell.

The halo of light fell on Goodman's prone corpse. Just as Ravic had left it that afternoon. Naturally. It was only the wind blowing through the ruined prison—

Krang! Something clashed behind him and he leaped as if a bomb had gone off beneath him. He whirled about and the beam of light splashed on the cell door. It was closed.

He threw himself against the door but it wouldn't budge. Jammed in the frame again, he thought. Where was that iron bar? He chopped at the floor with the blade of light, searching. Then he remembered. *I left it out in the corridor this afternoon.*

The light splayed over the half-decayed corpse. "Oh God," Ravic whispered. Again he became aware of the wind. That damned wind! It had trapped him in here just as surely as it had trapped Goodman last month.

But wait, he suddenly thought. *Was it the wind? There wasn't any wind when I stepped in here—was there?* Lord. He couldn't remember! But if it hadn't been the wind, then—

Someone could be on the island. A madman, say. One of the ex-convicts who had gone off the deep end. Perhaps one of the old prisoners who had served time on St. Joseph. He could have stolen a boat and returned to the island, be living there as a recluse, and no one would ever know it. There were coconuts to sustain life, and berries, and fish in the sea, and probably even water on one of the three islands . . .

A madman, say, who had hid in the ruins when Goodman came, and who had trapped Goodman in this cell and left him there to rot.

Ravic's imagination saw the madman: incredibly old, emaciated and filthy in verminous rags, wild-haired and bearded, lurking now in the whimpering black corridors, rubbing his skinny hands together, chortling insanely.

Who? Vramy?

"You out there—listen!" Ravic yelled. The sound was incredibly loud, echoing and re-echoing through the crumbling cell block, until the wind gathered it up and threw it out to sea. Ravic put a shaky hand to his face. God. Burning up.

"This is insane," he whispered. "There's no one out there. No one on the island, except myself. I'm going insane."

He was afraid he actually might—if he couldn't get out. He would start to scream and rave, the way Goodman had, before the skeletal hand of starvation had clutched him. The fishermen would return tomorrow but they wouldn't dare land on the island. And Ravic's yelling would only serve to scare them away . . .

Vramy, they would say, *Vramy has caught him.*

He was unable to remain still any longer. He started pacing the cell. Twice up, twice back. Two paces up, two paces back, grazing the clamminess of the walls as he turned, brushing against the bunk, the slop bucket, against the walls, carefully stepping around the maggoty corpse.

He had to do something. There had to be a way out. He couldn't just stay in this cell and starve to death. True, it had happened to Goodman—*but that was Goodman.* Goodman was a stranger, a body, a nothing. He was Ravic, and nothing that bizarre could possibly happen to Ravic!

His hands lifted to his mouth. Laughter that was more than hysterical bubbled up through his lips. In his brain gathered a reddish cloud wherein a blurred and frantic figure struggled helplessly against the crowding concrete walls of the cell.

It had happened to Goodman

. . . it had happened just now to Goodman . . .

He stopped. He stared up at the six bars covering the cell, remembering. Goodman had tried that. Well—Ravic grunted and sprang for the bars above, did a chin-up, then put one hand and arm between two bars and looped it there, hanging now by one forearm. His free hand explored the end of the corner bar.

The overhead bars were two inches thick, made of iron. Their ends were bedded deep in concrete. But through decades of tropic rains and terrific heat the concrete had softened and cracked. And three sinuous creeper vines had wove themselves around the bars as to a latticework, and their hardy clutch had helped to loosen the corner bar. Not a lot, just a little, but . . .

The new moon, the child of the old one that had died, was not yet born and the star-dark night gave poor light to work by. And the wind persisted in tossing great shadow spokes across the bars. Ravic muttered some of the scurrilous old words he had seen scratched on the cell walls, and dropped back into the cell. He found his flashlight and sprang up to the bars again. Balancing the torch on the edge of the wall, he went to work on the corner bar, hanging by his right arm to the second bar from the end, steadily shaking and wrenching and levering the other one, watching the little specks of loosened concrete glance down.

Somewhere he had read that the half-demented prisoners used to hang from their bars in this fashion, like so many caged apes. It was called "crawling the iron" and it warranted brutal punishment if noticed by the guards.

Idiotically, Ravic caught himself listening apprehensively for the footsteps of the ghostly guards on the catwalk above.

I really must stop this line of thought, he warned himself.

BUT IT WASN'T easy. He wanted out of the dark claustrophobic cell so badly he was nearly ready to start butting his head against the bars. He wanted away from that

rotting corpse. The thought of those stinking maggots working down there in the steamy dark was maddening. So was the horrible stench.

He thought the bar was coming along. It seemed to have more play to it now. Lord knows how long Goodman had worked at it. Maybe two weeks. If his strength had only held up he probably could have broken out of the cell after all. That was one big point in Ravic's favor. He was still fresh and as strong as a bull. *If it wasn't for this damned fever . . .*

The whorl of light rolled abruptly, blazed blindingly in his face, then plunged through the bars with a shocking smear of white light. He heard the flashlight strike the floor beneath him.

What had—Atavistic fear struck up along his spine in a sharp and rapid wave. He didn't wait. He dropped down, catlike, grabbed for the glowing flashlight and snapped off the beam of light.

Was someone up there on the catwalk? Had an unseen hand pushed the flashlight over the edge? *I shouldn't have used the light,* Ravic raged impotently. He hadn't really needed it. He would have known when the bar was loose without having to see it.

Now he knows what I'm up to. What will he do? Just wait up there for me?

"Vramy?" he whispered the word toward the shadow-tossing bars overhead. "Are you there? Is anyone up there?"

Silence—the wind dead again. Only darkness now, outside and inside the small cell. Darkness relieved temporarily by sheet lightning far north, born in the storm-breeding mountains of Guiana. But no thunder rumbles were audible on St. Joseph, and when the distant lightning died out the darkness was redoubled. Then a hard black-crystal rain swept in and began drumming violently on the old rusty tin roofs.

Ravic shoved up from the floor. Surely even a madman would have enough instinct to run for cover in a torrential downpour such as this. He sprang for the bars again, started working frantically on the corner one, wrenching, pulling, heaving.

The rain hammered down on his head and face. His bar-bent forearm was numb from fingertips to elbow. From elbow to shoulder it sparkled with pain. His suspended body cramped and recramped. But the cold black rain felt good on his hot face.

Outside, unmuffled by the thick walls, sounded the harsh drumbeats of the driving rain on the tin roofs; beats which seemed to conflict like several stations all sending at once on the same wave.

The wind picked up again at dawn, blowing warm. The sun climbed. Ravic wrestled with the bar. The sun's heat gathered and

concentrated and pressed down upon the open cells, heavy and terrible. Sweat rolled and dripped from him, forming small rivulets along the caverns of his cheeks and chest. Heat that was almost fluid in its weight and closeness converged upon his body from all sides, from the walls and floor of the cell. The iron bars burned his arm and blistered hand.

Then, miraculously, the end of the corner bar was free in his hand.

He sobbed with relief, with a sense of grateful compassion for Goodman. If it hadn't been for Goodman's previous work on the corner bar . . .

He dropped into the cell, gasping for breath in the liquid-like heat, and started to massage his numb right arm. All right. He would take Goodman's papers and he would notify—

Everything inside him slammed to a startled halt.

A cautious scampering sound was coming along the catwalk.

The muscles tightened in Ravic's calves and thighs. He leaped at and clung to the bars overhead, thrusting himself up against them, trying to see what—who—was coming. But he couldn't. There wasn't enough room for his head.

The enigmatical sound scrabbled closer. Footsteps?

Some final inner mental barrier gave way within Ravic then. He yelled like a prehistoric man trapped in a cave by the mysteries of a primordial world that were too much for his elemental comprehension. He shoved up terrifically at the loosened bar. It came loose in his hand and he rammed it aside and shouldered, battered, his body between the other bar and the wall, his threshing feet pawing at the cell door, and then he was up and out and crawling over the edge of the catwalk.

He didn't stop to look. He took off along the catwalk, jumping over a dried palm frond the sea breeze was herding, and raced into the wind until he reached the end of the walk. He went bounding down the free stairs at the corner of the cell block.

He didn't wait for the last five steps. He took them in a wild leap and hit running, like a cat out of a bag. He charged across the deserted yard in a hysteria of haste, passing within a few feet of the flat guillotine stone. A crimson splotch winked at him in the sun.

God. There was a pool of fresh blood on the stone!

He went by it in a mad rush, aiming for the compound gate. He threw one quick glance to the side as he darted through. His pack and sleeping bag were on the ground just inside the gate, as if waiting for his departure. He didn't stop for them.

Then he was in the jungle. Heavy trees, moist with the predawn rain, wrapped with vines, interlaced by bush-cord, intermin-

gled with thorn thickets, formed a matted mass almost impenetrable.

But not for a man nearly out of his mind with fear and fever. He slipped through the maze like a fleeing wraith, veering around stout trunks, sliding between others, holding an erratic course which bore gradually to the sea.

Abruptly the jungle opened like a tawdry stage curtain and he stumbled onto the rocky shore. Clothes and skin ripped and daubed red, his face bruised and dirty, sodden with sweat, he limped down to the water and looked for his boat.

It was gone.

Of course, he thought weakly. *It would be the first thing he would do. Hide the boat and block my retreat from the island.*

"Not me," he whispered feverishly. "He isn't going to get me. I'll swim to Royale or Devil. I'll—"

He shut up, realizing that he could not, dare not, attempt to swim to one of the other two nearby islands. Not the guards, but the sharks had been the real watchdogs of the *Iles du Salut*. Everyone who had read anything about Devil's Island knew of the shark-infested waters around the misnamed Islands of Health.

Beaten, burning with fever, Ravic waded heavily into the shallow surf and fell. The cold rushing water had a therapeutic effect on his tortured body, revived his energy. He pulled himself upright and pawed the sea from his face, hearing now a sound that was incongruous to the rumbling surf—the *rockity-ockity-ockity* of a missing motor.

Blankly, he watched the little fishing boat putter down the channel, fetching his rowboat along in tow.

The toothless one came ashore in the small boat; that is to say he came within a few yards of the shore. He watched the jungle with an apprehensive eye as he backwatered, calling:

"You will have to wade out, *monsieur.*" Then, as Ravic approached the stern, he said, "We found your boat adrift this morning. Evidently you did not pull it far enough up on shore to miss the flood tide."

"Yes," Ravic said. Because he was rational now, nearly so. At least he now understood it really was the wind that had been his enemy: slamming the cell door, causing the screaming in the night, rolling the flashlight off the ledge, sending the scampering palm frond along the catwalk like little scurrying feet.

And faced with calm daylight reality, he understood about his pack and sleeping bag too. They were exactly where he had left them yesterday, just inside the gate. He had simply forgotten and thought he'd left them by the guillotine stone.

The bloody stone? He started to

laugh at himself, the bubbling, almost hysterical laughter of last night. A rainpool in the center of the evil old scarlet-stained stone, with the setting sun striking it just right . . .

The toothless ex-convict watched him with a concerned look.

"You are all right, *monsieur?* You look like a man with the fever. I have seen many out here. Perhaps—something happened to you last night on that damned island?"

Ravic stopped laughing. He looked at the old man soberly.

"Yes," he said. "Something happened to me on the island."

The toothless one stopped rowing.

"Was it—Vramy?"

Vramy? Yes. And much more than just one man. Because now he understood that any abandoned place where men had lived and suffered and died must always be haunted by the memory of their ordeal. The *Iles du Salut* were like old battlefields. They would retain their ghosts as long as the earth endured. It was a state of mind.

"Yes," Ravic said honestly. "It was a ghost."

In the Next Issue—Complete and Exclusively Yours—

THE VOLCANO BOX AFFAIR

A Thrilling New "Man From U.N.C.L.E." Novel

by ROBERT HART DAVIS

It was an impossible assignment for Solo and Illya. An assignment from which they—or no man—would probably come back. Somehow, U.N.C.L.E. must wring from the very sealed fortress of THRUSH itself the dread secret of the hell-made energy which could force the very inmost fires of the earth to pour forth—and turn great cities into molten death traps! Don't fail to read this sensational novel!

MR. WONG DISAGREES

by DAN ROSS

She was rich, lovely—and quite dead. And somewhere in that house of strange hates lurked her murderer . . .

INSPECTOR BANNERJEE of the Bombay Homicide Division said, in his very precise British accent, "A woman has been murdered and a jade necklace you sold her stolen." The inspector was standing across the desk from Mei Wong in the old art dealer's studio on the fifth floor of the great Indian city's Empire Hotel. His swarthy bearded face wore a stern expression.

Mei Wong sat back in his swivel chair, a troubled shadow clouding his broad Oriental face. He had not been immediately aware of his friend's entrance until he'd spoken, having been completely absorbed in the examination of a blue vase of the Ming dynasty which he'd been studying under a strong magnifying glass. Now the glass and priceless item of pottery lay neglected on the mahogany desk as he gave his full attention to the inspector's shocking statement.

"You are saying one of my clients has met a violent death?" He sounded shocked as he sat there in his immaculate white linen suit.

Only the whirring of a large-bladed overhead fan broke the silence for a moment. Then the tall, ascetic featured inspector nodded grimly.

"Celia Mason," he said.

Mei Wong gasped as he heard

Featuring

MR. MEI WONG

who it was and recalled the last time she had visited his studio. Not more than a few months before. And it was then he had sold her the valuable jade necklace. It had been well within her means, since her husband was Thomas Mason, managing-director of one of Bombay's famous export firms. A dominating man, much older than his lovely blonde young wife and immoderately devoted to her.

Mr. Wong's pudgy hands clasped the arms of his chair. "What a tragedy!" he said in his quiet, rather toneless voice. "How sad for her and how dreadful for her husband."

The dark-bearded inspector nodded. "He is in bad shape. I have come to you because I feel certain you may be able to help."

The old art dealer spread his hands. "Anything I can do."

"She was found strangled in her bedroom," Inspector Bannerjee said. "She and her husband had adjoining rooms. He claims he thought he heard her moving around in her room late last night but, knowing she suffered from occasional bouts of insomnia, he assumed she had gotten out of bed to take a sleeping tablet. This morning he opened the door to her room and found her stretched out on the carpet, throttled with a silk cord from her dressing gown."

Mr. Wong frowned. "And the jade necklace was missing. So you assume the motive was robbery."

There was a strange gleam in Inspector Bannerjee's eyes. "The necklace which she had been wearing last evening and left on the dresser was gone. And a youthful house boy who Mr. Mason had hired recently has vanished."

"I gather you are now trying to find him as the most likely suspect."

"We have a full-fledged manhunt under way. I don't doubt we'll locate him, though it's possible it may take a few days. This is a large city and we have a flourishing underworld. Undoubtedly his initial move will be to try and dispose of the necklace. Since most of the fences are known to us and not anxious to be mixed up with a murderer we shall most likely get a tip from one or other of them."

The old art dealer nodded. "And then you can close in on your murderer."

"If the servant is actually Celia Mason's killer."

Mr. Wong showed mild surprise. "You suspect someone else? What possible motive exists besides the simple one of theft?"

"Several," the inspector said dryly. "We are dealing with a rather complex household. I'll need you to possibly identify the necklace and also for advice."

"What sort of advice?"

"You know most of the personalities involved," the inspector said. "I'd appreciate your visiting the scene of the crime with me. It is

possible you may hit on something we have missed."

"I doubt that," Mr. Wong said modestly. "I do know the estate well. Thomas Mason invited me there on many occasions. And of course I was acquainted with Celia and her sister Sarah."

"Sarah has been visiting at the house. She is there now."

"Then this will be very bad for her as well."

The inspector shrugged. "Since you know them, may I suggest there was no love lost between the sisters? As I understand it, Sarah, the elder of the two, was the first to catch the interest of Thomas Mason. Celia stole his affections and married him. Hasn't there been some bitterness and jealousy on Sarah's part?"

Mei Wong sighed. "I know there has been gossip."

"And now Sarah is apparently attempting revenge by trying to ruin her sister's name in death. The Masons have another house guest, living in the small cottage on the estate, Cleveland Wren, the big game hunter and mountain climber. You must have read some of his books or at least his newspaper articles."

"I believe so," Mei Wong said. "I had no idea he was here in India."

"He knew the Masons back in England," the inspector said. "And he's been their guest for almost a month. He's a handsome man and athletic for someone approaching middle age. Sarah Lane claims she saw him coming down the stairs last night in a shaken condition. She is suggesting he had been visiting her sister in her room and that he is the one who murdered Celia Mason."

"Did anyone else see him? And had he any reason for being in the house?"

"Not at that hour," Inspector Bannerjee said. "And no one else saw him. Naturally he denies the whole business and puts it down to Sarah's spite."

"What is the attitude of the husband, Thomas Mason?"

"He refuses to believe his wife was unfaithful. Thinks the story has been made up by Sarah. He has complete trust in his friend and guest, Cleveland Wren. And he accepts his version of things—that he didn't leave the cottage to return to the house after they finished their bridge game for the evening."

The old art dealer knew the inspector well enough to detect the slight frustration in his voice. He said, "But you do not agree?"

The tall, bearded man shrugged. "Anyone could have strangled Celia. The servant boy in order to steal the necklace, her husband in some sort of jealous rage, Cleveland Wren as her disappointed lover or even her sister, Sarah, because she hated her. Anyone of them could have drawn that cord around her throat tightly enough to

strangle her. It's all so complicated. That is why I'd like your opinion on the case."

Mr. Wong rose and reached for his Panama hat, which had been resting on a book at the corner of the desk. "I assume you'd like me to go now."

"I'd appreciate it," the inspector said.

The Mason villa was surrounded by huge grounds kept in perfect condition by a staff of native gardeners. It overlooked the bay and was situated a pleasant distance from the city. An officer stood on guard at the door of the high white mansion and let them in.

They first interviewed the grieving husband and Mei Wong was shocked at the change in the wealthy financier. His face was deeply lined and he walked in the uncertain, bowed manner of an old man. He had aged overnight. Slumping into a chair, he wearily gave his account of the previous evening.

He ended with, "It has to be the servant. This business of Sarah trying to complicate things is pure madness on her part!"

But when the inspector and Mei Wong interviewed the arrogant, lovely Sarah in the same chair she was just as emphatic in her views. "I did meet Cleveland on the stairs, regardless of what he says. I'm sure he's the one who killed Celia. I know she was having an affair with him!"

"You have proof?" the inspector's voice had a sharp edge.

She went deathly pale. "No. But still I'm certain of it."

The third person they interviewed in the big living room of the mansion was Cleveland Wren, the famed adventurer. Mei Wong could tell the death of his hostess had badly shaken him, whether it was because of guilt or because he had been in love with her it was hard to say.

He stared at them in anguish. "I liked Celia! It is nonsense to say that I would murder her! She was one of my oldest friends."

"Were you in love with her?" the inspector wanted to know.

Cleveland Wren hesitated. "No," he said finally. "I had too much respect for both Celia and her husband to be guilty of anything like that."

With the interviews over the inspector and Mei Wong spent a great deal of time looking around the sprawling house. The old art dealer lingered long in the murdered woman's room and stood quietly while the inspector showed him where the body had been discovered with the cord tight around her neck. Wong then went out and investigated the balcony overlooking the garden which the late Celia Mason must often have used. It was small with a railing of widely spaced iron bars.

Wong went outside the villa. While the inspector was busy with

a phone call the old art dealer spent some time investigating the ground directly underneath the balcony. After which he returned to Celia Mason's room. When he rejoined the inspector downstairs he had a request to make.

He said, "I wish you would have a search made of the estate for a section of strong rope. And don't mention this to anyone but your own men. You might find it in a garbage disposal can or something of the sort."

Bannerjee nodded but showed little interest. He was far too excited about the phone call. "I've had word from the city. An underworld dealer called headquarters. It looks as if we're going to get our man. He's left the necklace with the dealer and is coming back for his money later."

The inspector paused. "I may as well drive you back to your studio." It was clear he felt the matter was settled.

The following morning Bannerjee seemed even more certain of this when he arrived at Mei Wong's studio with a satisfied look on his ascetic brown face. "The case is solved," he said. "We have the servant and he's confessed to the robbery. But he stole the necklace after Celia was throttled with the cord."

The inspector paused. "Sarah was right. It was Cleveland Wren who strangled Celia. He shot himself in the cottage last night and left a suicide note admitting he'd loved her."

Mei Wong listened with patient interest and when the inspector finished he sighed and said, "I regret it is not that simple."

The other man looked astounded. "Why do you say that?"

"I have a reason," the art dealer said. "Did your men find that rope?"

The inspector frowned. "I'd forgotten. Yes, one of them located a length of rope stuffed in a box in an outside shed."

"Good," Mr. Wong said rising. "I suggest we return to the Mason house."

They were all in Celia's room as Mei Wong opened the French doors onto the balcony. Sarah, looking ill and frightened and Thomas Mason, pale and weary. An officer held the sullen young servant in custody and Inspector Bannerjee appeared the most surprised of anyone.

Mei Wong addressed them as he held the piece of rope the police had given him. "You will note this is not long enough to reach from the balcony here to the garden," he said.

He then moved across to a closet and opening its door rummaged for a moment on a high shelf to turn and show them a shorter length of the same rope and a kris.

"I found these here yesterday," he said. "And I risked leaving them here. An examination will show you this rope matches the other

and that the two sections were severed by a jagged cut made with this kris."

"What are you getting at?" Inspector Bannerjee asked.

Mei Wong turned to him. "I'm suggesting Celia Mason kept this rope in her room and tied it around the balcony railing so her lover, Wren, could make his way up it to join her here without entering the house. On the night of the murder Thomas Mason heard sounds in this room and fearing it might be an intruder bent on theft, snatched this kris from his wall where it formed a decoration with a similar one. He rushed in here to find his wife waiting on the balcony for Cleveland Wren. The lover was already part way up the rope.

"In silence, Thomas Mason swiftly whipped the cord from his wife's dressing gown and then looped it around her throat with two long strands hanging down. Then, pressing the kris against her trembling body, he whispered instructions for her to stretch flat on the balcony with her head protruded through the railing bars."

Thomas Mason interrupted hoarsely. "What sort of nonsense is this?"

"Wait!" Bannerjee said.

"And now came the moment of drama and revenge," Mei Wong went on. "With Wren close to the balcony, Thomas Mason calmly went about cutting the rope near the railing. In doing so he gave Wren the choice of falling to his death on the concrete walk below or of reaching out and grasping the cords dangling from Celia's neck and saving himself!"

In the background Sarah gave a strangled gasp. "Oh, no!"

Mr. Wong nodded gravely. "No doubt Thomas Mason enjoyed the moment. Perhaps Celia begged Wren not to save himself by grasping the cords hanging from her throat and surely strangling her. A braver man might have refused or found a way of escape. Wren didn't.

"When the rope snapped he grabbed for the cords and saved himself as he slowly throttled the woman he loved. The two men must have confronted each other for a moment over Celia's dead body. Thomas Mason was satisfied with his revenge and willing to cover up what happened to save his wife's reputation. Wren could not live with what he had done and so took his own life."

As the old art dealer ended his account the stricken husband of Celia surprised them all by rushing forward and with a wild cry throwing himself over the balcony to certain death.

There was a hush in the room; then Bannerjee said, "You might have stopped him, Wong. You were in the entrance to the balcony. Why didn't you?"

The old art dealer merely shrugged.

Get to Know the Lady U.N.C.L.E.

THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE

SHE'S QUITE A GAL, this dynamic girl agent whom Alexander Waverly describes to his top men as "An armful of dark-haired danger." She's sultry April Dancer, the brilliant new queen of espionage and sudden death who has joined forces with U.N.C.L.E. in its never ending war with the evil that is THRUSH. Every issue of THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE features April Dancer and her partner, Mark Slate, in a brand-new novel streamlined to your reading pleasure and starring the most sensational cast of spy luminaries ever to take a reading public by storm.

> METRO GOLDWYN MAYER-ARENA'S *smashing nation-wide television show, like this, its magazine counterpart has a sensational partner, "The Girl from U.N.C.L.E." It has already joined its famous* BIG BROTHER *to make the U.N.C.L.E. adventures the most talked-about thrill in the world of spy fiction. Be sure to follow them also in this splendid magazine,* THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E.

AND REMEMBER—The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. will continue to present, each issue, the kind of high octane stories you like, featuring and co-starring with April Dancer the brilliant Mark Slate, "The man whose business is Danger." Plus, of course, Napoleon Solo, Illya Kuryakin and Alexander Waverly, the famous U.N.C.L.E. trouble-threesome who have revolutionized spy adventure fiction everywhere.

APRIL DANCER *and Mark Slate know how to live—and how to die, if the time comes. You'll vote them tops in your reading hit parade. Reserve your next copy now! It's a sell out on many newsstands already!*

The Old Pro

It's a one-way street, with Death at the end, when you travel the gunman's road...

by LOUIS RILEY

THE KID STOOD huddled in the shallow doorway, barely sheltered from the cold night rain. Across the wet street lay the all-night diner he intended to rob. As soon as the time was ripe—as soon as he could muster enough courage.

If that damn bum in there would only leave! He'd been sit-

ting in there now for over forty minutes, killing time over one lousy cup of coffee. Obviously the man was homeless and was trying to stay warm and dry. If the old fool only knew what was about to happen he would get out fast enough.

The clock in the grease-stained, rain-lashed window of the hamburger joint read four in the morning. Down the deserted street the corner light glowed dimly in the murky darkness. The pavement in front of the little restaurant reflected the red neon sign above it.

The kid nervously fingered the butt of the pistol in his coat pocket. He was beginning to feel the cold now. Damn the old tramp! Why in the hell don't he leave?

There hadn't been another customer in there for over half an hour. If the bum would leave, the counter man would be by himself. That would be the time to strike.

In the distance a car approached, its headlights stabbing through the plunging rain. It came nearer rapidly, and even now was stopping in front of the diner. A police car!

The kid hunched back into the doorway as one cop got out and sprinted for the cafe. The driver snapped a match in the night and lit a cigarette. He exhaled the smoke and stared moodily ahead through the windshield, where the wipers droned endlessly back and forth like a metronome.

The kid cursed softly. He could hear the police dispatcher's voice crackling incoherently in the soggy darkness. He scrunched closer against the wall.

Peering across the street, he could barely discern the figures through the steamed glass of the dinette. The cop inside had said something to the counter man and was now over at the table where the bum was sitting. He stood over the old man talking.

Now he jerked his thumb to the west, like he was telling the miscreant to get moving. The old man nodded in a vigorous manner and said something back to the cop. Now the policeman nodded in turn, wheeled about and headed for the cigarette machine. He put in some change, pulled a lever and tucked the resulting pack into his jumper. The watching kid had a sudden craving for a smoke, but that was out, right now.

He shifted his gaze to the cop smoking idly in the prowl car. He heard more static from the radio. The cop lifted the mike from its slot and said something into it. Then some metallic instructions came over the air, something about an accident. The cop said something else into the mike, then hung it up. He crained his neck to peer through the window of the cafe and gave a blast on the horn. The sudden sound made the kid start.

The police officer inside picked up a white bag from the counter—

coffee, probably—threw some money down, said something more to the old man as he again jerked his thumb. He stepped out the door, clutching the bag tightly and leaped for the car. The police unit then sped off into the night.

The kid trembled outwardly. Damn the cold! His fingers fondled the solitary quarter in his pocket. He could go over, drink a hot cup of coffee and smoke a cigarette till the bum left. Such an act would do wonders for his nerves. Then he discarded the idea. The hell with it. If he needed something to quell his nerves then he had no business starting out in this kind of life!

The time to stick up the joint was now—while those two cops were busy. Let the tramps fall where they may; if the old man got in his way it would be just too bad.

Looking left and right through the now torrential downpour, he saw that the street was still empty. He stepped from the doorway, coat collar up, right hand gripping the pistol in the pocket, strode into the rain, crossing the street. Might as well get it over with.

He opened the door and stepped into the brightly lit interior. The counter man was in the back somewhere. How in the hell could you hold somebody up that was in the back room?

He stood there uncertainly for a moment, dripping water on the waxed tile of the floor. His heart was thumping. He sensed the old man eying him. Where in the hell was that damned cook?

"Hey, kid," said the old man, softly.

The kid whirled and looked at him. He was a seedy appearing man of about sixty-five or seventy. His clothes were shabby and still damp. Tousled gray hair protruded from an old blue hat above startling blue eyes. He had about a three-day growth of stubble on his chin.

"Come here, kid," he rasped. The old man motioned for the boy to come.

The kid looked toward the rear opening where he heard dishes clattering, then moved warily over toward the man. The palm of his hand was sweating where he clutched the gun, still in his pocket.

"What do you want, pop?"

The man reached over, pushed a chair out from the table and motioned for the kid to sit down.

"No."

The man spoke softly up at him in almost a whisper. "You're goin' to stick up the joint, yeah?" It was a statement.

The kid cocked an eye at him and glanced again at the rear of the restaurant. He could hear the rain pounding ceaselessly outside. An ominous roll of thunder reverberated across the heavens. He regarded the man again.

"What do you know about it, pop?"

The man snickered. "I saw you

standin' across the street for almost an hour."

The boy looked out the steamed window. He could make out the doorway he'd been slouching in.

"That don't mean anything," said the kid. "I could have been getting out of the rain."

"I know better, kid. I'm an old heister, myself." The man looked around to see if they were still alone. "I just wanted to stick around and see how you worked it."

He coughed, then said, "I can see you're no pro by the way you stood out there so long making up your mind."

The kid rankled. "You better watch your tongue, old man. You might get it shot out of your head."

The man clucked happily. "That's the way to talk, boy! You might make a good one someday." He motioned to the empty chair and said: "Why don't you sit down and let me give you some pointers?" It was more like an order.

The kid grimaced at him. "I don't need pointers from you. You don't look like you were so hot."

"Thats true," said the man. "But I can give you some ideas, and maybe you can benefit by some of my mistakes." He pointed again at the chair. "Go ahead. Sit down kid."

The boys knees were shaking so bad he had to sit down to control them.

"Okay, pop," he said. "Suppose you give me some of your valuable 'pointers', as you call them."

The old man chuckled. "In the first place, you have no disguise of any kind. Anybody could put the finger on you."

"I don't plan on staying around after I get this money," the kid said. "I need it to get out of town, go to a bigger city."

"Sure, sure. But you should never leave open ends. I left some and look what it got me."

"What did it get you, old man?"

The man looked around again and leaned closer to the boy. "Let me put it this way, kid. You know where the state penitentiary is, about a mile out of town?"

"Yeah. I know where it is."

"Well, I put altogether better than thirty years behind those walls, kid. Thirty years. Just for leavin' a few loose ends around. If I'd been smart, I would have never seen the inside of the joint."

The kid looked at him. "Thirty years? Just for one holdup?" He sounded incredulous.

"No, kid. I didn't do it all in one stretch. It was six different terms they put me in there. I finally had to quit. The next time they would have thrown the book at me, give me the bitch."

"The what?"

"The bitch. That's slang for when they send you up as a habitual criminal. Man, there's no way in the world that you can get out after they hit you with that one."

The counter man came from the rear and looked over at the two curiously. The old man waved at him and said: "Bring us a couple of coffees, Red."

The reedlike cook, with equally thin red hair, eyed them quizzically for a moment, then drew two cups of coffee from the huge urn. He brought the steaming mugs over to the table, along with sugar and cream, while the kid eyed him coldly.

"I don't usually give table service," said Red, "but you guys look pretty wet and tired. Besides, you'd just be slopping up the floor by walking over to the counter."

"Very funny," said the old man. He sneered at Red's retreating back.

Another rumble of thunder resounded overhead.

"Nasty night out," said the man.

"Yeah," the kid agreed. He stirred cream and sugar into his cup. Fishing around in his shirt pocket, he came out with a crumpled pack of cigarettes and set fire to one. He inhaled the smoke gratefully, then expelled a stream of it over the old man's head.

The man stirred his coffee idly for a moment as if contemplating some deeply profound problem. In the silence the rain drummed on, spent water streamed down the window of the cafe, and the clattering of dishes resumed in the rear of the place.

Finally the old man said: "Now, let's see. Where was I?"

"You were talking about getting the bitch," said the kid. He took another drag on his cigarette.

"Yeah." The man took a sip of his steaming coffee and clucked his lips appreciatively. Then: "I knew a lot of guys up there in that pen, kid. Some of the best in the business. Sooner or later, I got to know them all. Being in the same line of work, our paths were bound to cross at one time or another. Did you ever hear of Cuddy Wellston?"

"Yeah," said the kid. "He was that tough bank robber they gassed a couple of years ago."

"You're right," the man said. "The papers said he was a tough one, sure enough. I knew him on the outside and I knew him on the inside. He never really killed anybody, but he was in on a robbery where somebody got shot and killed. He was considered reponsi-

ble and so he got the death penalty. The ironic part about it, though, was the fact that the guy that got scragged was in on the holdup too."

The man glanced around once more, and then winked confidentially at the kid. He said: "But he wasn't as tough as the newspapers made him out to be. In the end, when they carried him to the gas chamber, he blubbered like a kid. Wanting his mother, and all, you know. By the way—how old are you, boy?"

"Seventeen."

"That's a good age. That's how old I was when I started out. Only I was unlucky. I started out with this penny-ante stuff myself. By the time I was eighteen I'd made myself about two hundred dollars and five years over there in that pen. I figured that time out of my life netted me about four dollars a month. And then I had to use that money for some shyster lawyers thatdidn't know a courtroom from a bar stool. But maybe I was kind of lucky, at that. I could have got a tenner thrown at me."

The kid shook his head in uncertain sympathy.

"That was a tough break," he said.

"Yeah," the old man rasped. "But that's all in the past. Maybe you'll have better luck than me, although I doubt it. When I started out they didn't have near the communications system they got today, to say nothing of the criminal identification bureau. Nowadays, as soon as they know who you are they got you pegged for the rest of your life. It's just a small matter of time before somebody spots you and you are picked up and hauled off. In this day and age, they even know if you change your brand of toilet paper."

The man took another swig of coffee while the kid snuffed out his cigarette in the ash tray on the table.

"Your first stretch in the pen," the man continued, "will be your toughest. All the old cons in there will be fighting over you because you are a new fish. They try to make girls out of boys up there, and you'll find yourself fighting for your life in order to prove to them that you're a man.

"Then you'll have to do time in the hole for fighting. But the next time your in, the old cons will know enough to leave you alone. In fact, you might even find yourself battling with them over some new fish just out of quarantine."

The kid shifted uncomfortably. "You sure know a lot about the penitentiary."

"I ought to, boy. Like I say, I spent thirty years of my life up there. The joint is chuck full of guys that ain't man enough to make it on the outside, myself included, I suppose. Somewhere along the line they made their first mistake and then couldn't stop.

And also, you'd be surprised at the amount of guys who are up there for stealing less than two hundred dollars."

The old man took another sip of coffee, then continued: "Of course, you might make it. You might never see the inside of those walls. But the odds are that you will get inside sooner or later. That is, if you don't get yourself killed first."

Another rolling of thunder sounded, this time, off in the distance. The old man cocked an ear to it.

"Sounds like she might be movin' off," he said.

"Huh?" The kid had been lost in his thoughts.

"I said," repeated the old man, "I think the storm is movin' on."

"Oh, yeah," said the kid, uninterested in the elements. "Tell me some more about the pen, pop."

And so it was that the old man talked while the boy listened. As he warmed to his subject it was apparent that he thoroughly knew that of which he spoke, and it was not an attractive picture he was drawing. He had undoubtedly spent thirty years of his life behind those walls, as he claimed.

He knew every thief and murderer by name and seemed proud, yet somewhat humbled by that knowledge. He coursed through the years in a half hour, what it took those men interminable and monotonous months to accomplish.

Yes, he knew that of which he spoke, and he had a very good reason for knowing it. He had been there a long time, himself.

Finally, he said to the kid: "Say, boy, how come you to decide on a life of crime? Trouble at home?"

"You might call it that," said the youngster. "It's my stepfather. Him and mom are always arguing. Especially, when he's drunk. He's always raising hell around the house and Mom raises hell right back at him. They fight a lot about me, but it's a losing battle, I think for Mom. So finally, I just took his gun and beat it."

A twinkle appeared in the old man's bright blue eyes.

"That's exactly what happened to me," he said. "I had an overbearing stepfather and decided to leave home too. But I'll admit now that it was the worst mistake I ever made in my life."

The kid looked concerned. "You mean because you had to do all that time?"

The man's eyes saddened, now. "No, son, not that. I don't worry about the time I did. That's all water under the bridge. What bothers me is that I walked out on my mother when she needed me most. After I left, she was there alone with her husband. She needed me around, if for nothing else but moral support.

"But I was a young hothead and didn't give a damn. Ran off anyhow. It broke her up. She never

was the same again. Never really had nothing left to live for. Now that it's too late, I realize just how wrong I was. That was my first real chance to face up to the world and be a man by sticking home when I was needed most. But I blew it.

"I couldn't see it at the time, but when I was doing my first stretch I found I had plenty of time to meditate. When I got out, it was too late. She'd already died."

The old man lapsed off into a reminiscent silence.

The kid gazed unseeingly into his empty coffee cup, thinking.

Outside now, the rain had finally stopped and the first glints of the morning sun appeared. The late spring sky was brightening rapidly.

The old man suddenly came to. He looked out the window.

"Well," he said, stretching his arms, "Looks like it's going to be a good day after all. The sun's going to be out to warm and dry everything up. I'd better get going before that cop comes back and vags me. I'd hate to be locked up on a day like this. Yeah, kid, I think it's going to be a beautiful day."

He put twenty cents on the table. "That's for the coffee, kid. Thanks for listening to an old man chatter about a wasted and useless life." He got up to leave. "If you ever get up to the pen, tell the boys I'm thinking about them."

The kid stared at him vacantly for a moment, his mind ill at ease. He appeared to be experiencing an internal struggle. Then with a snap of his fingers, he erased the conflicts inside. He stood up also.

"Forget it, pop," he said. "And forget about me saying hello to your old cronies. I'm not going to any state pen. I'm going home and stay with my old lady. Like you say, she needs me now. I'll finish school and get me a part time job while I'm finishing it." The kid looked around, smiling for the first time. "Maybe I'll even get me a job in this restaurant, here."

The man clapped the youth on the shoulder and nodded vigorously. "Now you're talkin' boy! You don't want to wind up like me. You're too fine a lookin' lad."

They went out the door together and silently shook hands. They went their separate ways.

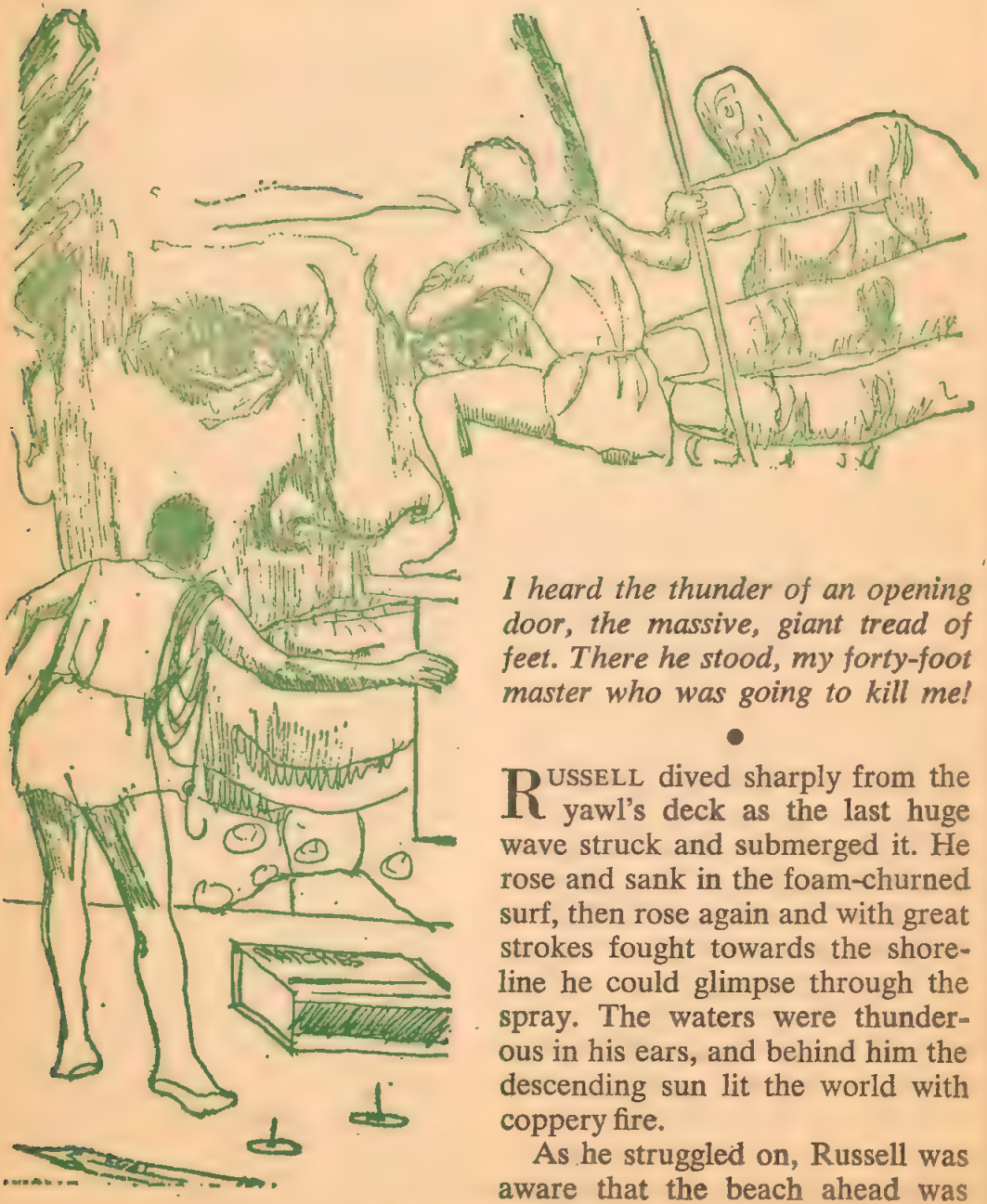
A few minutes later the pay phone rang in the little cafe. Red, the counter man answered.

"Hello? Oh, hi, Babe. No, it was a quiet night. Too much rain, I guess. Just old Bill Johnson sitting in here with some kid for a while. His car broke down west of town as he was coming in from a three day fishing trip. He had a policeman go rout out a mechanic and take it to the garage. Sure does a lot of fishing, that guy. Ever since he retired from being warden of the state penitentiary, he—Huh? Oh, yeah. I'll bring it home later, when—"

Outside, the sun was shining brightly, now.

pigmy island

by EDMOND HAMILTON



I heard the thunder of an opening door, the massive, giant tread of feet. There he stood, my forty-foot master who was going to kill me!

●

RUSSELL dived sharply from the yawl's deck as the last huge wave struck and submerged it. He rose and sank in the foam-churned surf, then rose again and with great strokes fought towards the shoreline he could glimpse through the spray. The waters were thunderous in his ears, and behind him the descending sun lit the world with coppery fire.

As he struggled on, Russell was aware that the beach ahead was

Copyright 1930, by Weird Tales

DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES

The life of a magazine story is sometimes all too brief. A month or two on the newsstands, a warm memory which fades and it is gone. So transitory is magazine publication that far too many outstanding tales are overlooked and forgotten before they have their deserved chance for fame. "The Man from U.N.C.L.E. Magazine," because of its very freshness and unconventional approach, would seem to be the perfect medium in which to bring back some of these great stories of the past. From time to time, therefore, in this magazine you will see this **Department of Lost Stories.** *When you do read with care and discrimination. You will be reading a story which, whatever its field, whoever its writer, has been revered and remembered as too good to be forgotten. "Pigmy Island," by the well known Edmond Hamilton, is one of these. Read it! You won't forget it!*

THE EDITORS

nearer. The giant waves from behind bore him forward towards it, but the deadly undertow gripped his feet with serpent grasp to pull him back. He kicked, struggled, and at last felt firm sand beneath his feet, and staggered up on to it beyond the clawing grasp of the waves.

He looked about him, dazed. He was standing on the beach of an island some three miles in length. Its surface, clothed green with sycamore and oak and brush, sloped gently up to higher ground at the island's centre.

A sound came to Russell's ears over the roar of the surf, and he half-turned. Down from the island's wooded centre by a narrow path a shirt-sleeved and hatless man was hastening towards him. As he approached, Russell saw that he was over middle age, with quick eyes and a keen, intellectual countenance beneath his greying

hair. His face held anxiety as he came closer, hand outstretched.

"Greetings! I saw your boat foundering from my place—but it seems it was all over before I got here. You're not hurt?"

"More chagrined than hurt." Russell managed a smile. "They told me over in Charleston that if I went too far out from the coast the squalls would get me. But I thought I could pull the yawl through them."

The other seemed relieved. "Well, it was as narrow an escape as I've ever seen. These squalls are treacherous, and if you hadn't been near this island . . ."

"It was just luck that I was," Russell admitted. "And I never expected to find anyone here until you appeared. Most of the islands this far off the Carolina coast are uninhabited, aren't they?"

"Most of them are, but this one happens to be the site of the Northern University Biological Station. You may have heard of it?"

"Of course!" Russell was interested. "Over in Charleston I heard."

"I'm Dr. James Garland, the biochemist of the station, and just now its only member. There are ordinarily a half-dozen of us here—Dr. Wallace, the head, Professor Lowerman, and three others. They've all gone off to Charleston for a vacation and I'm the unlucky one who stays here while they're gone."

"Russell's my name," the younger man said. "One of New York's struggling attorneys, on a trip south in a yawl that I always thought until now I could manage."

Dr. Garland smiled. "I'm afraid you'll have to put in a few days here with me until the others get back, for they went in our only boat. If you can put up with a somewhat irregular one-man household?"

"Crusoes can't be choosers," Russell said. "Besides—I've heard something about this station. I'm really glad of the opportunity to visit it."

"Well, you'd better begin your visit by changing to dry clothes. Lowerman's about your size. I'm sure he'd be glad to lend you anything of his if he were here."

Dr. Garland led the way across the beach and along the narrow path that twisted upwards through the spring-green woods. The sun was sinking lower behind them, and the keen sea-wind, striking Russell's dripping garments, soon had his teeth chattering. He was glad enough when they came out on to the more sparsely wooded plateau that was the island's highest part, and climbed the squat frame bungalow and the long and broad unpainted frame building some distance behind it.

"The laboratories!" Garland gestured towards the latter structure. "I'll show you all over them

later, but just now the quicker you change the better."

Russell followed him into the bungalow and across a roomy living-room with comfortable, masculine furnishings to one of the bedrooms at the rear. There the bio-chemist dug from a mass of carelessly piled clothing and impedimenta a set of garments that were well worn but dry and warm. When Garland left him with them darkness was falling, and Russell switched on the lights.

Arrayed in the dry clothes, he ventured back into the living-room and found Dr. Garland busy with rolled-up sleeves in the surprisingly neat little kitchen. Russell, proficient in a boat's galley, helped him prepare the meal that they were soon falling upon, their only conversation the occasional monosyllables of hungry men at table.

Sitting before the blazing fireplace a little later, and smoking one of the cigarettes his host had proffered, Russell reflected that there were, indisputably, worse places. Over the whine of winds outside there came to his ears the dim thunder of the distant surf. He hitched his chair closer to the comforting fire.

"I'm really immensely interested in your place here," he said. "I heard quite a bit about it over in Charleston."

"All of it good?" asked his host quizzically; and Russell grinned.

"Well, as a matter of fact, some of them did talk a good bit about you and your friends. They had some melodramatic whispers about something pretty fearful going on out here."

Garland laughed, blowing smoke from his cigarette. "The ignorance of modern people is often amazing, and the mere fact that we came to this lonely spot to set up our research station was enough to let those good people know that we were up to something that we wanted to keep hidden."

"It is a rather unusual spot for a research station, isn't it?"

"Not at all," Garland promptly disclaimed. "The main purpose of this station is to make an exhaustive study of the evolutionary differences between some of the lower invertebrate sea-creatures. For that reason a sea-location with varied depths and conditions is necessary. We persuaded the university to let us come here. Of course, we all have our own sidelines here still—Wallace has his chromosomes, and Snelling his cell-theory, and I my size-changing work. But we've all got to spend most of our time on the station's main research or the university wouldn't support it long."

Russell caught at one of his phrases. "Your size-changing work?"

The bio-chemist waved his cigarette. "I've been able to stimulate the pituitary's functioning to an unheard-of degree, or to halt it almost

altogether. Of course, control is still rather a problem."

"I'm afraid you'll think me ignorant," Russell said, "but that means as much to me as algebra to a Hottentot."

Garland laughed. "Well, the thing's simple enough in theory. You know, I suppose, that the size of a human or animal body is directly dependent on the functioning of its pituitary gland?"

"I seem to have heard something about a gland controlling the body's size," Russell admitted.

"No doubt," said Garland dryly. "Well, the pituitary gland, which is located near the centre of the head, does actually control the size of the body by its secretions. If it secretes normally your body is of normal size. If it secrets more than normally you are a giant. If less than normally, you are a dwarf. Now, since that fact became known biologists all over the world have sought to stimulate or lessen the gland's secretions and so increase or decrease the body's size.

"This experimentation has been on the whole rather fruitless so far. It's true that by tampering with the gland biologists have been able to make some animals a little larger or smaller than normal, but that's all they've been able to accomplish—a mere stunting or hastening of growth. The fact is that the ductless glands like the pituitary and thyroid are such delicate organisms that when we tamper with them surgically we damage them nine times out of ten. I became aware of that years ago, so left it off and started working from a different point of attack.

"I have—" Garland suddenly halted, rising to his feet. Grasping a heavy stick of firewood, he stepped softly to the door, then flung it suddenly open.

Russell, amazed, heard the quick scurrying of something on the verandah outside as the door was flung open. For a moment Garland gazed intently out into the darkness, then closed the door.

"Damn them—they get bolder every day!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Rats?" asked Russell, and the other looked over at him and nodded.

"And cursed annoying ones, too," he said irritably.

His brow cleared as he resumed his seat. "Well, as I was saying, I've gone at this problem of influencing the pituitary gland in a different way. I said to myself, why cut open the head and take immense risks to reach the gland, when through the blood that nourishes it we can reach it easily? I said, what if I devise a compound which when injected into the blood-stream will in time flow through the pituitary gland and excite it into unheard-of activity? And what if I work out an opposite compound that will reach the gland in the same way through the

blood, but that instead of stimulating will halt, or almost halt, its functioning? You perceive of what that would mean?"

Russell's brow puckered. "Why, good Lord!" he exclaimed. "That would enable you to increase or decrease the body's size at will!"

Garland bowed. "You see it. So I set to work devising the two necessary compounds. The thing seemed clear in theory, but I don't mind saying that it's proved cursed difficult in actual fact. But I've plugged away, at the university and here, until I have the formulae for my two compounds all worked out, and have been able to make enough of them to prove their efficacy beyond any doubt.

"I take a dog, for instance. I inject into one of his arteries leading into the head the stimulating compound. Soon that compound, carried by the blood-stream, reaches the pituitary gland, and at once, by reason of its irritant effect upon the gland, spurs it to tremendous activity. It throws its secretions into the dog's body at a terrific rate. I may say parenthetically that the injection produces coma almost at once in the subject. Within a day that dog, lying in coma, will have increased in bodily size to a giant dog six times its normal stature, if the stimulating compound has been injected in sufficient quantity. It will wake as a giant dog and will remain the size indefinitely, the compound in the gland stimulating it unceasingly until neutralized by the opposing compound.

"You will say, that dog increases six times in actual bulk and weight in its day of coma; how can that be? I ask in turn how did the dog increase from a small puppy to a full-grown dog in a year? It did so because in the food it ate and the air it breathed it took in food-elements that its body-organism turned into tissue. Had it breathed more or eaten more it would not have grown faster, for the body organism can only assimilate the food-elements at a certain rate, and that rate is directly dependent upon the secretions of the vital pituitary gland.

"But, by immensely increasing their secretions, I have immensely accelerated the rate at which the body-organism can assimilate food-elements. The sleeping dog, in its coma, does not eat, but it breathes. The air it breathes contains in itself and in its carbon dioxide and water-vapour all the vital food-elements of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and hydrogen. These elements are assimilated thus from the breathed air by the body-organism at a tremendous rate, cells forming into tissue and bone at incredible speed, building up a body several times the size of the normal body.

"If the opposite compound were injected, it would slow the secretion of the pituitary gland, and

with that vital function almost halted the body would begin to throw off its own tissues with immense speed. By the familiar waste-processes of exhalation of air and perspiration it would throw off matter from itself at an unheard-of rate until it had reached a size consonant with the reduced functioning of its vital gland. If that compound were injected the dog would wake from its coma of a day to find itself but a fifth or sixth of its normal size. That the whole process would work in exactly the same way with a human being I have no doubt whatever."

Russell shook his head. "And you've really made those compounds? You've actually tested them on animals?"

"Of course—and with very fine success. But that success will have to be complete before I can publish."

"It seems like something out of fairy-tales. Of course, I don't doubt your word—but to make a living thing greater or smaller in size—it's one of those things you'd have to see to believe."

Garland laughed, relighting his cigarette. "Simple enough," he said. "I'll show you something over in the laboratory tomorrow that will make you believe. I could show you tonight, but I'm afraid your dreams would be rather nightmarish."

"Speaking of dreams makes me realize that I'm half into them now," said Russell, yawning. "I don't know why I feel so sleepy tonight."

"The usual effect of scientific discourse," Garland said. "Don't apologize—I'm used to it—my class-rooms were veritable halls of Morpheus when I got well into a lecture."

"Much more likely it's the effect of my tough time today," replied Russell, laughing. "That same room's mine for tonight? Well, I hope I'll be wakeful enough by morning to look at your experiment."

Russell found himself stretching and yawning hugely as he prepared to retire, and it seemed to him that his head no sooner rested on the pillow than he was slipping into sleep. He half heard a scratching and scurrying somewhere in the room's wall or floor, but was on the last rim of consciousness by then, and in another moment had drifted off it into dreamless slumber.

~

WHEN HE CAME back to wakefulness his first sensation was of a strange tingling in all his body, accompanied by a recurring nausea. He stirred, rubbed his eyes, sat up, his movements seeming oddly clumsy to him. He opened his eyes, blinking, looking around him with an irritated incomprehension that in a moment more had changed to stupefaction. His heart leapt uncontrollably.

He was not in bed in the room where he had retired, but was resting, quite unclothed, upon a thick mass of folded cloths that made a small pallet. It rested directly on the floor, but the floor itself was of smooth glass that was apparently immensely thick. And all around Russell there rose the gleaming walls of a great glass room, illuminated by clear sunlight.

He staggered to his feet, uttering an inarticulate cry. For almost a score of feet above him, apparently, rose the foot-thick glass walls. In them was no door or window or opening of any kind. They came to an end above with the glass room's ceiling or roof quite open and roofless. Russell stumbled to the glass wall of his strange prison and gazed dazedly through it.

Another hoarse cry came from him, for he was gazing out upon a scene that seemed at the same time unutterably familiar yet unutterably strange and grotesque. The great glass room seemed to rest upon a long gleaming platform of burnished metal, scores of feet in width and hundreds in length. Upon it there rested here and there objects familiar in shape: metal and glass beakers and retorts, balance-scales and microscope, but all of size gigantic. The microscope's great tube loomed for twice Russell's height into the air! He could have hidden in the beakers!

He swayed to another of his glass prison's four walls. From it the view was different—a window a short distance from the glass wall. But the window was colossal in size, too, on a scale with the microscope and beakers! Through it he made out the fiery disk of the descending sun, and against it outside swung branches that seemed of trees huge beyond all experience!

Russell, strange sounds in his throat, reached another wall, and saw that from it the view was one of a room, a colossal room of cathedral proportions but rectangular in shape, with white halls and ceiling and with huge tables and chairs several times his own height ranged along it. And it was on the metal top of one such enormous table that his square glass prison rested!

There came to his giving brain a flash of vague remembrance and comprehension—Garland's talk of the night before—Garland's calm statement of his powers—and Russell, his mind submerged in horror, sank to the gleaming floor.

Into his stunned brain in the next instant penetrated a great clicking and clashing sound from the distance that brought him to his feet in a bound. One of the great doors at the vast room's end had swung suddenly open and there had stepped inside the appalling figure of a man. Between thirty and forty feet into the air he seemed to loom, a giant who came

towards Russell's glass prison with thundering tread.

And it was Garland! Garland—his eyes keen with interest as he bent over the glass enclosure. As his huge head loomed over the glass room's open top Russell could only stare upwards, paralysed. Then he saw the great lips moving and there came down to him the rumbling thunder that was Garland's voice.

"I promised to show you something that would make you believe in my work, Russell," he was saying. "Well, behold that something—yourself!"

"Garland, damn you!" Russell was sobbing in his rage and terror. "What have you done to me?"

The scientist's vast laugh thundered. "Don't take it so hard, Russell. You're not the first one to find yourself a foot in height—Wallace and Lowerman and the others of my esteemed co-workers are no larger than you, so you're not alone."

"Wallace . . ." Russell almost forgot his own terrible situation in that revelation. "Then Wallace and the others—you did the same—"

"The same as to you," the great voice rumbled. It became suddenly again thunderous. "Do you think that I would restrict my theory always to animals and never try working it out on men?" His great eyes burned.

"I perfected the two compounds two weeks ago, Russell. I drugged the other five, Wallace and Snelling and Lowerman and Johnson and Hall. I injected the gland-depressant compound, the size-decreasing compound, into the neck-arteries while they lay in that drugged sleep. Of course, it would have been just as easy to use the other compound, but I knew too well what their reactions would be when they woke."

"Through the next score of hours the bodies of the five shrank almost visibly before me, their tissues disintegrating and being thrown off at a terrific rate. I brought them here to the laboratory when they had ceased shrinking, each a pigmy man hardly a foot in height, like you. I had prepared a crude prison for them, and meant to use the size-increasing compound on them when they woke. That way, you see, I could test it also without danger of making them large enough to be formidable to myself. They were crazy with rage when they woke, of course, just as you are. I counted on making the second test even against their will.

"But they escaped, damn them! My prison for them had been too crude, and they got away in the night, got down one of the rat-holes in the laboratory here and have been lurking around and under the place ever since. You heard them last night at the door? I hope the rats get them, and they

surely will in time—a foot-high man is no match for a full-grown rat or snake, I assure you.

"But I had to have another subject to go on with the experiment, and fate sent me you, Russell. I would have swum out into that surf to rescue you if you hadn't got ashore, I wanted you so badly to work on. You were so sleepy because your food was drugged last night, and in the twenty-odd hours since then you've had the size-decreasing compound in your pituitary, have been shrinking in size every minute, until you're the magnificent pigmy proof of my work that you now are. And now I can give the other compound, the size-increasing one, its final tests on you."

As Garland spoke he placed on the table and opened a narrow black case. It held two six-inch glass tubes, one filled with a bright red liquid and the other with a brilliant green one, and also a hypodermic needle of odd design.

Russell was raging futilely at the great head bent above him. "Garland—you're mad—mad!"

Garland was calmly withdrawing the liquid-tubes from their case. "Quite possibly. Madness and genius are so closely akin that no one has ever been able to mark their exact dividing-line. Are all madmen merely geniuses of an order incomprehensible to us? An interesting thought."

"But you'll go no further in your insane experiments with me!" cried Russell.

"You'll do well to remember, Russell, that on me depends your one chance of regaining your normal size. I make no promises, but—"

Russell shook his hand towards the looming giant face. "No—I'll die this way first, Garland! You've made a pigmy, a monster, of me—but you'll get no chance to go further with your devilish work on me!"

Garland slipped the liquid-tubes imperturbably back into the case. "Quite illogical. I'll give you until morning, Russell, and if you're still so obstinate I think I can bring you to terms. A few large spiders put in with you—they'd seem rather terrible in size and ferocity to you. Really, it would be amusing. You'd better think it over."

He drew over the top of the square glass box a sheet of heavy wire-screen, which he fastened tightly over the box's top by means of projecting hasps, through which ran a chain held by a small strong padlock. Fastened thus it formed a strong lattice-work secured over the box's top. With it in place Garland grasped the black case.

"Until the morning, Russell."

Left alone, Russell crouched for some moments in silence, unmoving. The sun was sinking outside, he saw, for its level rays were fading and dusk was beginning to thicken in the laboratory's corners.

There came to Russell dim memory of the sunset—how long before?—that had seen him struggling through the surf towards this island of horror.

He rose, paced along the wall of his glass cage, then with sudden crazy impulse flung himself against it. The impact left him bruised and breathless. He lay for some time panting, the shadows in the laboratory deepening as night came outside. Through an opposite window, though, an intensifying flood of silver moonlight was pouring into the long room, so vast to his diminished perceptions.

Russell looked up to where the heavy screen that Garland had fastened over his glass prison gleamed dully in the moonlight. It seemed more than twenty feet over his head, and it took but a few leaps to convince him that all hope of touching it even was futile. The smooth and perpendicular glass walls gave no slightest hold, and there was nothing in his transparent cell to aid him in climbing. There was nothing, in fact, but the thick mass of dark cloth on which he had lain. Russell tore from it enough of the stuff to make a clumsy tunic, which he tied around him. The garment comforted him oddly.

He sat down at last, his hope waning. Even were he to escape from his prison, Russell told himself, only Garland and his size-increasing compound could release him from the more terrible prison of his pigmy size. Only Garland—and he knew that, whatever promises Garland might make, he would never permit him to leave the island alive.

Russell sat on with hopelessness gnawing his mind, unheedful of the moonlight that was brilliant now in the laboratory. It picked out things here and there, the flange of the microscope, the handle of a tool, the pans of the balances—and made them shine dazzlingly. To his ears there came no sound from outside, and Russell was only aware of how deep was the silence in the laboratory when it was broken finally by a sound.

It was an odd scratching sound from the laboratory's floor, beneath the shadow of one of the tables. Russell listened intently.

The sound came again, stopped, and then he heard hesitant footsteps. He rose and sprang silently to the wall of his glass cell, gazing into the laboratory. At first he saw nothing unusual; then his eye caught a movement, and he saw that out from the shadow of the great table opposite were cautiously advancing two figures. They were men, two pigmy men of the same foot-high stature as himself!

They were quite visible in the bright moonlight, gazing cautiously around. Both were dressed in rough, tunic-like garments not unlike his own, and both carried what seemed long, metal-pointed

spears. They halted, and Russell saw them gazing up towards his glass prison. He almost uttered a shout, but changed it in time to a loud hiss. At the sibilant call the two waved quickly, as though glimpsing him, and then were running away beneath him, along the laboratory floor and out of sight.

Russell's heart was pounding. For a moment in which his heart sank he thought they had fled. Then he saw them again.

Far along his great table a chair stood close to its edge, and the two were clambering up with some difficulty on to this. Grasping rungs and leg, they pulled themselves up until they were on the chair's seat. Then they were at the harder task of climbing up one of the rungs of the back towards the table's level. Russell saw them toiling upwards, the corrugations of the rung helping them, until they were level with the table's top, a few inches from them. They clung to the rung an instant, then leaped.

They struck the table's metal top and collapsed in a heap, but almost at once were up and hastening towards his prison. As they came closer he saw that one was young, his own age, and the other somewhat older, both dark-haired and unshaven men. The spears they carried were in fact slender wooden rods about eight to ten inches in length, to the end of each of which had been bound with fine wire a small, sharp-pointed nail. These were, for the foot-high men, tremendously heavy and formidable weapons.

The two came to the glass wall, peered inside at him. He opened his mouth to call to them, but one shook his head warningly. Russell was silent, watching them with pulse throbbing.

They conversed with each other in low whispers, pointing first to the thickness of the glass wall and then towards the heavy screen fastened over the box's top. At last one hurried off along the table, searching for something, while the other began to uncoil a roll of what seemed strong rope rolled round his body. It was in reality a length of ordinary twine. By the time he had it uncoiled and had knotted it here and there the other had re-

turned, a short piece of steel wire in his grasp.

The two grasped it and with a great effort bent it into the form of a hook. In a moment they had tied the twine-rope to it; then the older of the two whirled the shining hook around his head and sent it hurtling upward. It curved down and fell upon the lattice-screen over the glass box, was dragged along it for a moment, then suddenly caught in one of the screen's openings. At once the younger of the two was climbing upwards by knots, the other holding the rope steady beneath.

Russell saw the climber gain the top and inspect quickly the chain-fastening and lock that secured the screen over the glass cell. After a moment he whispered down to the man below. The latter tied one of his spears to the rope, and in another instant the one above had it in his hands. He inserted it in one of the screen's openings, prized and levered this way and that until he had made an opening a few inches across. Russell was watching intensely.

Then the man above drew up the rope from outside and let it fall down through this opening into the glass cell's interior. His whispered order was not needed, for in an instant Russell had grasped the rope and was climbing. He reached the top, balanced beside the other on the glass wall's edge, panting.

"You're Garland's new experiment?" the other was whispering hoarsely. "You're the man who came yesterday—that Garland used the compound on?"

Russell panted his name. "And you?"

"I'm Snelling, and that's Lowerman down there. Did you hear of us? I thought Garland might have told you when you woke. We saw you come with him yesterday—we did our best to warn you, but couldn't. There are Wallace and Johnson and Hall besides us two. Garland's experiments—pigmies, all of us. The others are waiting for you now."

Russell struggled for reason. "But where?"

"Down beneath the laboratory," Snelling whispered. "We have a place there—we use the rat-holes and runways to get about—and Wallace sent us after you—has a plan——"

There was a warning whisper from the waiting figure beneath, and Snelling pulled Russell towards the wall's edge, drew up and let down the rope again upon the outer side of the wall. Russell slid down it, the other close after him.

Lowerman hastened to their side, his haggard and unshaven face clear in the moonlight. He grasped Russell's hands.

"We've got to get down to the others at once," he said. "There's not much time left."

Russell found himself hastening along the long metal surface of ta-

ble gleaming in the moonlight, with Lowerman and Snelling on either side of him. It came to his dazed brain to appreciate for a moment the utter grotesqueness of it—that he, a pigmy of twelve inches height, should run with two others like him along the surface of a table! A sensation of unreality held him until they came to the spot where the chair stood beside the table, its back-rungs a few inches away.

Lowerman, without hesitating, jumped for the nearest or corner rung and grasped it, clinging at the same time to his spear, sliding down to the chair's seat. Russell followed, grasping the rung with all his strength, lowering himself to the seat also. Snelling was but an instant behind him, and already Lowerman was clambering down from the seat to the floor. In another minute they all stood there.

Without hesitating, they hurried Russell across the floor, a vast wooden plain to his eyes, and into the lightless-shadow beneath the great table opposite. They reached the wall, fumbled along its juncture with the floor, until Lowerman's whisper indicated that he had found what he sought.

As Russell's eyes became a little accustomed to the darkness beneath the table he saw that Lowerman and Snelling had brought him to a round, ragged hole that had apparently been gnawed through the wooden strip at the wall's base. It was in reality, he knew, but a few inches across, but seemed to him that many feet.

Lowerman had already stooped, was wriggling through the hole and disappearing into the still deeper darkness inside. His whisper came out to Russell, but the latter shrank back. Snelling, though, grasped his shoulder.

"It's the only way, Russell. Straight on—we've used these rat-holes for the last two weeks."

Russell mastered his instinctive terror, stooped, and wriggled through also. He found himself in darkness absolute, and felt in a moment the touch of Lowerman's hands. A scraping sound told him that Snelling was beside them.

There was a loud scratch and splutter and a bright light flamed abruptly beside him. Lowerman held in his hand what seemed a short wooden cane burning brightly at one end. It was only when he suddenly remembered his own present pigmy size that Russell recognized the burning cane as an ordinary match.

The flame illuminated the place in which they stood, the interior of the wall. It seemed a narrow long hall whose walls towered up to colossal heights into the darkness above. Lowerman had fumbled for something on the floor, producing finally a crudely shaped and thick little piece of candle. With the great match he lit it, and as its light replaced that of the expiring match he motioned Russell onward. With

Lowerman leading, holding the lighted candle-piece, they started along the vast-walled narrow corridor that was the wall's interior. Russell fought against his sense of utter unreality as they went forward.

They moved on until Russell estimated that they must be approaching the corner of the wall. He wondered whither Lowerman was leading. He wondered——

"Snelling—back!"

As Lowerman's tense whisper hissed, the three sprang back as though plucked by a great hand. Russell heard from ahead a strange, rushing, loping sound, then a confused deep squeaking grunt that froze his blood. Lowerman had thrust the candle-piece into his hands, had sprung forward with Snelling, their spears level! Russell glimpsed one—or was it two?—great dark shapes ahead of them, just beyond the range of the candle's light, saw the gleam of quick eyes; then a swift rush of feet as the things sprang.

There were two of them, twin monstrous shapes that Russell could not recognize as rats despite his brain's assurance. Fully half his own height they towered, with bodies as long as he was high—great fur-clad monsters whose eyes were gleaming and whose open jaws were white-fanged and snarling as they sprang. He felt the impact of their rush, saw Snelling go down and Lowerman knocked to his knees as they thrust at the onrushing beasts with their spears.

One of the huge rats squealed as Lowerman's long nail spearhead sank to its depth into its body. Russell glimpsed Lowerman, braced against the floor, thrusting the spear deeper into the thing as its great furry body flexed and stiffened convulsively against the wall. But Snelling was down beneath the other, the great jaws at his throat. Russell, a madness of combat on him, threw himself forward, thrust the lighted candle in his hand against the beast's side.

There was a sickening smell of burnt hair and flesh instantly, and the beast whirled with a squealing snarl upon Russell. He dodged sideways, felt fangs closing on his thigh, then felt those fang unclosing almost instantly. He staggered up, saw that Snelling and Lowerman were driving their already bloody spears again and again into the second rat's body.

As Russell stumbled to his feet the great rat lay still, its paws slowly closing and unclosing. Russell felt Lowerman and Snelling at his side, found himself laughing weakly. "Fighting death-combats with rats inside a wall!"

"Steady, Russell!" Lowerman clutched his shoulder. "We've got to go on—your leg's not hurt bad?"

Russell shook his head weakly. "It didn't have even a good hold on me. But let's go on, then—for God's sake let's go on!"

"Down here, Russell," Lowerman directed.

They had come to a gnawed aperture in the wooden bottom of the wall. Lowerman dropped through it, Russell handed down the candle, and then followed with Snelling.

He found himself in another corridor, but one whose walls were of damp earth. It was narrow, and only by stooping could they go forward in it. With Lowerman ahead and Snelling behind again he moved along it. The corridor twisted and turned to right and left, and here and there was crossed by other earth-tunnels. Before coming to each of these crossings they waited, listening, before venturing ahead.

The earthen tunnel twisted onwards, and at last Lowerman and Snelling turned with him into a branching corridor. This ended abruptly in a blank earth wall, in which was a single round opening that seemed a few feet across.

Lowerman extinguished their candle, and as he did so Russell saw that through the opening from beyond came a faint yellow light. They crawled through the opening, and he found himself in a fairly large den hollowed in the black earth. It was illuminated by an ordinary candle burning at its centre, one that seemed of enormous size to the pigmy Russell.

Around this candle, less than twice its height, three men awaited them. All were as unshaven and haggard of face as Lowerman and Snelling. One was big and white of hair, older than the others. Another had his shoulder tied in crude cloth bandages. Against the den's walls leaned several of the nail-head spears, some rude couches of cloth and grass, some scraps of food and candle. The smells of damp earth and smoke in the place were almost overpowering.

The white-haired man had grasped Russell's hand. "I hoped Lowerman and Snelling could bring you," he was saying quickly. "We dared not all venture up. Garland's laid so many traps for us."

Russell dazedly returned the hand-clasp. "Then you must be—you're ——"

"Wallace—Dr. Fairfield Wallace. I am, or was, head of this research station. This is Hall here, and this Johnson. He had a pretty bad time of it with a rat in one of the runways, but he's getting better now."

They crouched down around the candle. Until he died Russell would not forget that scene—their six pigmy figures around the looming candle. Wallace was leaning tensely towards him.

"Russell, your name is? Russell, we've got little time. Garland is mad. He is a mad genius of science, if there can be such a thing. He worked for years on his gland compounds, his size-changing compounds, until they have become a

mania or obsession with him. His great aim was to try the compounds on human beings, and that's why he got us to establish our research station on this isolated island, though we never guessed it at the time. And once here he drugged us and injected the size-decreasing compound into us all.

"We found ourselves pigmies, and we were in horror of what further fiendish experiments he might carry out on us, so we managed to escape and get down into this maze of rat-runways under the laboratory and bungalow. The things we've seen and done here in these last two weeks! Russell, back home I have a house, a family, a position in the scientific world. And I'm here hiding from rats and snakes, fighting spiders, hunting bats to kill for food!

"But no more of that. Our one aim has been to get the red size-increasing compound of Garland's that alone can restore us to our normal size. He coloured the two compounds red and green to distinguish between them, and the red one alone can ever bring us back from pigmies to men. And Garland knows that!

"He knows that our one aim is to get the red compound, and he has taken care that we should not do so. The only supply of it is in the tube which he carries with the other compound and his needle in that small black case. And each night Garland has locked himself securely in his bedroom in the bungalow, with the compound case. There's no hope of getting the case from him while he's awake, of course, for in our pigmy size he could kill all of us with a blow. Our one hope is to steal the case while he sleeps.

"In the last week we have been burrowing up through the wall towards his bedroom. We have a runway now leading up from one of the rat-tunnels beneath the bungalow to his bedroom wall, and we've only a thin surface of plaster left to break through now. So tonight we're going to try it, going to break through into his room and try stealing the case. If Garland discovers us it means death for us all, of course. But, only that single tube of red liquid will ever bring us back to normal stature. Are you going to try it with us?"

Russell drew a long breath. "I'm with you, of course," he said. "You're going to try it—now?"

"Now," Wallace affirmed. "We've got to make the attempt before Garland wakes, and it will take us some time to get from here over into the bungalow and up inside his room's wall."

THEY ALL STOOD up. Wallace gave quick orders to the others and they began crawling out of the cavity into the corridor or rat-tunnel outside. Wallace handed to Russell one of the heavy spears with its nail head.

"These wouldn't do us any good against Garland," he said, "but they help us against the rats and others."

"We go through the rat-tunnels to the bungalow?" Russell asked. But the other shook his head.

"No, just through them to the surface and then over to the bungalow and into its own tunnels. There is a perfect warren of them beneath these two buildings."

They crawled out after the others and stood in the rat-tunnel, with Lowerman and Hall carrying candles, whose flickering light feebly illuminated the earth-walled corridor. At once and without words they set forth along it, but in an opposite direction from that by which Russell had come.

The tunnel wound this way and that. Lowerman led with one candle and Hall brought up the rear with the other. Once Snelling jabbed forth his spear to pin to the earth floor a great thing that had been scuttling sidewise, a dark, many-legged shape that seemed of octopus size to Russell and that he only recognized after a moment as a big spider. Once, too, as they crossed another tunnel, there writhed in front of them a thick long snake-like thing that they passed unheedingly—a great earthworm.

The tunnel curved upward, and the going became harder, its roof still so low as to keep them stooping in it. In moments there came to Russell over the fumes of damp earth a breath of cleaner air. He glimpsed a round starlit opening ahead.

They were within a few yards of it, seemingly, when it was blocked by a dark shape rushing in from outside. Without a word Snelling and Wallace and Lowerman had rushed forward with ready spears. There was a grunt and click of jaws, a threshing that dwindled suddenly, and before the dazed Russell could more than realize that a huge rat had rushed into the corridor from outside the three were beckoning them on, panting, and with their spears bloody. Russell followed them sickly over the big, still, furry body.

The candles were extinguished and they came out into open air. Russell found that they were standing in grass, whose great blades towered above their heads all around them. He made out the dark looming expanse of a gigantic wall behind them, realized that it was the side of the laboratory building up from beneath which they had come. Ahead, just visible above the grass-tops, loomed another wall.

They had halted, and Wallace pointed towards it. "The bungalow!" he whispered to Russell. "Go quiet now, Russell——"

They started forward through the grass. It was like forcing through a thicket of huge vegetation as they struggled onward through the towering blades. The

wall of the bungalow loomed slowly closer as they went on.

They halted once as a giant winged thing that seemed of aeroplane size went by just above them with a whir of wings. A bat or bird of some kind, Russell knew. He caught himself glancing at the stars as they fought on through the grass, wondering if ever before they had looked down on such a scene as this of their pigmy band and its progress.

There came suddenly from Johnson, at the side of their little band, a low, tense whisper, and he pointed to the right with his unbandaged arm.

Russell, heart pounding, saw that to the right and ahead the towering grass-blades were stirred by a nearing commotion, parting this way and that. There was a dry, slithering sound nearer. Then he saw what it was that approached. A snake. A huge snake that was to their eyes more than a score of feet in length, between one and two feet in thickness. It was gliding through the great grass slantwise across their path.

The starlight showed clear to Russell as it neared the enormous flexing and unflexing length of the body, the triangular head and great jewel-like eyes. He strove to tell himself that the thing was but an ordinary snake made monstrous to them by their own pigmy size. He could only watch it with the others as it glided nearer. It did not see them, but glided past and vanished in the tall grass behind them. Russell was not aware of what horror was shaking him until he felt Wallace's steadying hand on his shoulder. He stumbled on with the others.

The great dark wall of the bungalow was closer, and as they went on through the great grass they changed their course, heading towards one of the building's corners. Beneath a thicket of shrubs near that corner they halted. A burrow-like opening in the earth yawned blackly beneath them.

Already Snelling and Lowerman were dropping into it. Russell followed with Wallace, heard the other two coming after them. They were in darkness until a match flared and spluttered to reveal another rat-runway like those beneath the laboratory. The candles were lit and they started along it. To Russell, his brain already dazed, the earth walls around them made it seem that their minutes of progress through the towering grasses in the open air was but a dream-like interlude.

The tunnel twisted upwards. They came to a great solid wood barrier over their heads, a round hole gnawed through it. When they had pulled themselves up through it they stood in the interior of a wall, a narrow and towering-walled corridor like that other laboratory wall whose interior Russell had come through. The little band went

along this and then after a few moments turned into another narrow wall-corridor opening at right angles from the one they followed. They clambered over obstructions until they came to a place where wood and plaster alike had been hacked out and a tiny hole pierced through the thin surface of plaster remaining on the wall's other side. At once the candles were extinguished.

Wallace drew their heads close. "This is Garland's room," he whispered. "We've worked for days to dig through this wall, Russell. Don't make a sound now until we have a look."

He turned back to the tiny opening in the plaster and peered through it. He motioned then to Russell.

"He's asleep all right," he whispered. "And the case—look!"

Russell peered through the opening. He saw a room like that which he had occupied in the bungalow on the preceding night—centuries before, it seemed—dimly lit by the thin starlight from the window, with a few chests, and articles of furniture, and a simple cot. On the cot stretched an unmoving figure, breathing regularly in sleep—the figure of Garland, gigantic to his eyes. And on a low table beside the cot was the black case that held the two compounds!

"We'll try it now!" Wallace whispered. "If we can steal that case and get away before he wakes . . ."

"Enlarge the opening now?" Snelling asked, his spear poised.

Wallace nodded. "But quietly, for God's sake!"

Snelling and Hall began to dig silently at the plaster around the opening, chipping it away with their heavy spears. It seemed iron-hard, but bit by bit they broke loose little fragments of it, enlarging the opening. Once a fragment fell outside and rattled on the room's floor, a foot or two beneath the opening. They all were silent and unmoving, but the regular, loud breathing of Garland continued.

At last they had chipped away an opening large enough to permit their passage through it. Snelling went first, sliding down to the floor

with spear in hand and catching and steadying the others as they too descended. Johnson was last, half falling. They stood upon the floor, a group of six pigmy figures, but a third the height of the great wooden chest that loomed beside them.

They started silently across the room towards the low bedside table. Russell, his breathing strangely tight, found himself carrying his spear poised, his eyes on the sleeping, huge figure on the cot. The absurdity of it came home to him—the thought that with the tiny ten-inch spear he could kill that enormous figure. They were almost beneath the low table now—his heart drumming with excitement—the eyes of the others brilliant with hope. The table—the case—the case!

A cry from Snelling, and they leapt back, but too late! The huge, motionless form of Garland on the cot had sprung into sudden activity, had leapt to the wall and with a single shove of his giant arm had pushed the great chest against the wall, covering the hole by which they had entered, blocking their retreat! Garland's hand found the switch, and far overhead in the ceiling flared the sunlike lamps, flooding the room with light. And Garland, a forty-foot giant to their eyes, confronted the six pigmy figures, fully dressed, a gleaming pistol in his hand!

His laugh rumbled down to them like thunder. "So you came at last!" he jeered. "Wallace—Lowerman—all of you—and even you too, Russell, escaped, I see. I knew you would come—sooner or later!

"You thought your burrowing through the wall quite unobserved, eh? You fools. You might have known that I was quite aware of it, and only let you go on because I knew that you would be coming in here to steal the compounds, and that I need only wait to trap you here!

"And trapped you are—trapped like rats to die the death of rats! Do you remember how we used to shoot at the rats with our pistols when we first came here? Well, the next few minutes ought to be just as amusing, with you six taking the place of the rats. I can get other and more tractable subjects for my experiments, I think. And as for you six, you can now——" His arm came up with the pistol.

Wallace cried to the others as their tiny pigmy figures sprang back beneath the table's shadow. "Snelling—Hall—get to his ankles—try to trip him—our only chance!"

Snelling and Hall sprang beneath the shadow of the immense cot just as there came a terrific detonation across the great room, and a smashing and splintering of the floor beside them as the great bullet crashed into it. The gigantic Garland, laughing in crazy amusement and not noticing the two running

figures beneath the cot, sent another bullet into the floor in front of them as they leapt to escape the first.

Russell saw Johnson trip as they recoiled again beneath the table, and dragged him with him an instant before another great bullet dug the floor at that spot.

They made for the shelter of the cot, but threw themselves back only in time to escape another bullet which sent clouds of great splinters over them. Lowerman, struck by a flying splinter, was knocked flat, and Russell saw Garland's giant arm train the pistol on him. But he saw too the foot-high figures of Snelling and Hall racing out from the shadow beside Garland to stab furiously at his ankles with their spears!

Garland stumbled, his fifth shot going wild. He started to whirl around to stamp upon the two pigmy figures beneath him, but they had gripped his ankles and he tripped, fell, his body across the room with head near the other four pigmy men, pistol flying from his grasp as he struck the floor.

Instantly the four foot-high men were upon him, clambering towards his throat with spears fiercely out-thrust. The battle of Gulliver and the Lilliputians re-enacted, it flashed through Russell's brain as he drove forward with his spear. But Garland, a vast bellow of rage coming from him, was scrambling up, his enormous arms knocking them this way and that. Russell felt himself whirling across the floor as a flailing arm struck him, saw Garland rising to his feet, his face crimson with rage. And Garland, his crazy amusement dissolved into mad fury now, was grasping a chair, whirling it over his head to send it crashing down on the scattered pigmy figures.

Russell, staggering to his feet even as Garland's chair swung up, felt rather than saw beside him a big metal shape, the pistol that had slid from Garland's hand as the giant fell. To the foot-high Russell the pistol was huge, but almost without conscious exertion he had grasped and lifted it, one arm encircling its great butt and his other hand on its trigger as he pointed it up like some clumsy big rifle towards the giant Garland's breast. He was not aware that he had pulled the trigger until the roar of the weapon and its tremendous force knocked him backwards. There was silence. . . .

Garland swayed as though in stupid surprise, the huge chair slipping from his upraised hands and

crashing to the floor—swayed, a spreading red stain upon his breast, until he too slumped and crashed in thunderous fall to the floor.

Russell was dazedly aware of voices and running feet, of the others crowding about him, weeping, sobbing, helping him up. Wallace and Lowerman were climbing to the low table, bearing down from it the black case between them, the six pigmy figures crowding round it as it was opened with frantic haste. The tubes of red and green compound—Wallace was filling the big hypodermic needle, the others supporting tube and needle as the red compound filled the latter. They crouched down near the room's centre, but away from the prostrate giant figure of Garland—and then Wallace and the great needle—a stab of pain in Russell's neck as it penetrated—and then swift darkness.

WHEN RUSSELL AWOKE, sunlight was warm upon his face. He opened his eyes, stirred, sat up weakly, nausea and weariness infinite upon him. Around him others were stirring. He looked about him dazedly, then with swift remembrance and comprehension. Wallace and Lowerman and Snelling, Johnson and Hall, they all were stirring, waking like himself, in the crowded room that seemed now not gigantic, but small.

And beside them another figure that did not stir—Garland! Garland—his dead figure no larger in size than their own!

They staggered to their feet, all dazed by the transition from pigmy to human stature once more. They were all without clothing, and on the floor lay the little rough tunics that had been theirs as pigmies, and the absurdly little spears. They groped out of the room after unlocking the door, and groped into clothing in the other rooms, like men restored suddenly from insanity to sanity. They poured, stumbling, out of the bungalow into the light of still another sunset, their speech still incoherent.

"The boat!" said Wallace thickly. "Let's get away—for God's sake, let's get away!" He halted suddenly. "But first——"

He ran back into the bungalow, and, when he emerged, disappeared into the laboratory, then joined them. As they stumbled away from the buildings, and down towards the island's shore, thin curls of smoke lifted from the two structures. They reached the shore of the island, opposite that where Russell had first landed, and there was the long boathouse with still upon its door the lock that Garland had placed there.

They smashed into it, and in a few moments had the cabin-boat out into the water—and heading with noisy motor away from the island.

Clouds of dark smoke were lifting skyward from the island's

higher centre as the flames ate the two buildings there. The sunset's level rays struck in vain against their black and billowing masses. Snelling held the boat westward away from the island, Lowerman and Hall and Johnson sprawled in its cockpit. Wallace pointed back with unsteady hand to the lifting smoke-clouds as he and Russell gazed.

"There never were any of Garland's compounds—never any pigmies that he made with them from men," he said. "Never anything but an accidental fire that caught James Garland. You understand?"

Russell nodded weakly. "Better so," he whispered. "Better that the world hear it so."

He crouched with Wallace, looking back still. The island was dropping behind, vanishing in the waters, but the smoke from it rose visible still into the heavens like a great black column, an enormous sign. Their eyes could mark it still, though the island itself had passed from sight. Snelling, though, had not turned, had not looked, heading the boat straight onwards into the setting sun.

Have You Met U.N.C.L.E.'s Crime Companion?

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Mike Shayne is crime fiction's one and only perennial favorite son —craggy-jawed, redheaded Mike Shayne, who takes his danger straight, his crime crooked and his bourbon without a chaser. For well over a hundred consecutive issues MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE *has headlined Brett Halliday's private eye. Now, bigger and more star-studded than ever, this magazine still features a new complete Mike Shayne adventure in every issue—together with stories by world famous authors. Buy it now! On sale where you purchased this copy of* THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE. *You will join the millions of crime-caper buffs who have acclaimed Mike Shayne as America's all time favorite crime-busting headliner.*

The Weekend Was Murder

Bahnhofstrasse
Street
Zurich
1850
Old sewer, No longer in use but still there. Requires bracing of roadway above to meet modern traffic and buildings
N

Half the gold in the world was there, waiting for the right man to take it. But—could he stay alive to spend it?

by STEVE APRIL

THE CRIME RATE in Switzerland is one of the lowest in Europe. It would have been slightly lower if it wasn't for Alfred and Hans. Hans was a surly 23-year-old lout

who had never quite recovered from seeing Humphrey Bogart movies.

Hans had been in trouble a few times, drunkenness and petty theft, a punk who constantly day dreamed of pulling the big caper. His hard working parents were *concierges* of a small *pension* on the outskirts of Zurich, catering mostly to poor students.

Alfred, who lived in Geneva, was a fifty-nine-year-old watchmaker and slightly above Hans on the crime ladder. Alfred was a fence and had done time for substituting cheap watch movements for those in the higher priced and famous Swiss watches. Hans knew Alfred casually; Hans sometimes acted as a tourist guide and did some minor pickpocketing. Alfred had bought a few lighters, pens and jewelry from him.

Each weekend Hans' mother gave the rooms a thorough cleaning. This Friday, as she was throwing out some trash, her husband picked a small ink sketch from the waste can. He said, "How neat the pen strokes are! And the paper! Feel of it—like old parchment. This seems to be a map of the Bahnhofstrasse, but in the old days. Ah yes, there is a date in the corner here, eighteen hundred fifty. How different the street was then! This sketch or plan seems valuable. You think perhaps the English architect student did not mean to throw it away?"

"Help me air the bedding. The student has gone to Nice for the weekend. Keep the map and I will ask him about it on Monday."

Hans, who had just gotten up and was having his morning coffee, glanced at the little drawing, for lack of anything better to look at. The Bahnhofstrasse is Zurich's main business street, but in 1850 the street plan did not show any of the great banks and modern shops for which the Bahnhofstrasse is now famous.

Hans was about to push the drawing away when he noticed a sketch of a sewer running under the street. He knew enough English to read the neatly printed:

Old sewer. No longer in use but still there. Requires bracing of roadway above to meet modern traffic and buildings.

Hans had little interest in sewers, old or modern, but on seeing that the sewer ran under one of the better jewelry shops, he came awake fast. If few people knew of this ancient and unused sewer, then probably the jewelry shop owners hadn't bothered to place an electrical alarm under their basement and one could dig from the sewer into the cellar of the store.

Taking the sketch, Hans cycled to the Bahnhofstrasse, arriving during the lunch hour. There was a quaint restaurant on the famous street, so ancient the building was marked on the drawing, with an opening into the sewer. Hans knew

one of the restaurant kitchen girls. Waiting until lunch was over, he went to the rear of the restaurant and asked for her. When he suggested they go into the cellar for a few kisses, the lumpy and surprised girl was more than willing.

As they sat on the flour sacks in the dim light, Hans casually asked where this and that door led to. The happy girl, thinking he was making small talk and shy, impatiently told him. Pointing to one heavy, old, wooden door, she added, "But that one, the Lord knows what is behind it. It has never been opened in my time. There is said to be nothing but a great dark hole behind, where the devil lives."

This was sufficient confirmation for Hans. Telling the girl she'd be missed at the sink, Hans left and once outside, checked his map. There was no doubt but that the map showed the door opened into the old sewer and breaking into the restaurant cellar at night would not be a problem.

But Hans knew the job was far too big for one man, so he was in Geneva Friday night, showing the old street plan to Alfred, pointing out that the restaurant entrance to the sewer was only a hundred metres from the present location of the jewelry shop.

Alfred pretended indifference. Actually he couldn't have cared less about the jewelry store. But he was ready to explode with excitement because some of Switzerland's largest banks, the Union Bank, Leu & Co., the Swiss Bank Corp., and others, were also on the Bahnhofstrasse. Alfred knew these banks were said to hold over five hundred millions is Swiss francs and gold. Obviously this could be the biggest bank robbery in crime history.

Alfred shrugged. "This would require too much time, tools and men."

"Why? The two of us could handle it on a Sunday when both the restaurant and the jewelry shop are shut."

"Well, maybe. Hans, have you told anybody else about this old map?"

"No. I came directly to you."

"Good. A car is the safest place to talk, let's drive around and talk it over."

Alfred tossed Hans' body into the deep waters of an old quarry, leaving the knife in his back. Alfred then phoned an old buddy who worked as a janitor in the Zurich town hall. He then boarded an early morning jet to Naples, where he made cautious inquiries about the whereabouts of "Lucky" Butino, the exiled American gang lord. It took most of Saturday morning for Alfred to reach Lucky, who was fishing alone on his small cabin cruiser off Capri.

Showing Lucky the street plan, Alfred came right to the point. "This will be the largest bank robbery ever, hundreds of millions! Of course it is far too big a deal for me.

This calls for a real organization, experienced box men, blast men, a fast getaway. Also, every known crook in Switzerland will certainly be watched once this is pulled, so I'll be busy making an alibi.

"Lucky, I know you have either the men needed or can make the right contacts. All I ask is a mere one hundred thousand dollars for this rare map. I have checked that there is an entrance to the old sewer in the basement of this restaurant."

"But suppose they have alarms under the bank vaults?" Lucky asked.

Alfred sighed. "I doubt it. I have also checked with a friend who works in the Zurich city hall and he never heard of this sewer, so why would banks think of anybody ever coming in *under* their vaults? Lucky, I can't give you all the answers, but think of a five hundred million dollar job! All I ask is twenty-five thousand dollars now, another twenty-five thousand dollars when you come to Zurich and I give you the map, plus fifty grand when the job is over. Is that not fair?"

"Five hundred million—man!" Lucky grunted. "I'll think about it. Alfred, have you been peddling this map around?"

"Of course not. Only you are big enough to handle it. I stumbled upon the map after a—fatal illness of the man who first had it." Alfred gave Lucky Butino a nervous grin.

"Listen, pull up anchor and I'll take you back to Naples, contact you in a few days."

Lucky neatly cracked Alfred's gray head with a chain as the old man was bending over the anchor rope, tied another anchor around Alfred's skinny legs and threw him over. The tide was going out and the fish would nibble on Alfred's corpse all the way to Africa. Lucky Butino then headed for Naples at full speed.

Ever since being deported from the States, Lucky's former pals in the U.S. had been rooking him and Lucky was broke, although he still managed to keep up the front expected of an ex-American bigshot gangster. But with five hundred million bucks—the very sum was staggering—he could rule the entire crime world, even possibly bribe enough Congressmen to legally enter the States again.

Due to his headline reputation Lucky Butino had a few local punks, teenage errand boys, who hung around when he let them. But this wasn't a job for punks.

Late Saturday Lucky had one of the punks make a carefully worded phone call, from the Naples post office to a 'wheel' in the French underworld, with whom Lucky had once tried to work out a narcotics deal. Sunday morning Monsieur Big and two other men landed at the Naples airport. They went aboard Lucky's boat, where one of his young musclemen stood

at the wheel, a .45 in his dungaree belt.

As the little cruiser moved leisurely out into Naples' scenic bay, Lucky and the French goon's eyes popped as he listened and studied the street map, mumbled, "five hundred million . . . twenty-five million francs! Fantastic! I'm in. I supply all the necessary men for seventy-five per cent off the top."

"Hell, that's about four hundred million bucks! Are you nuts? After we pay off the men, you get twenty-five per cent."

"Fifty per cent and I will pay off my men in the best possible way."

"No dice. You're out!" Lucky snapped.

The Frenchman sneered. "Stop it, you old has-been. Maybe you're the one who is out. Now that I know of this old sewer, who the hell needs you or your crummy map?"

Lucky Butino cursed the Frenchman, who belted him on the nose. Bleeding, Lucky staggered up to the deck, looking for a knife. One of the other French goons yanked out a small automatic. Lucky's strongarm boy fired at the goon with the .45. Never having actually fired a .45 before, he missed and hit the gas tank. The thirty foot cruiser went up in a flaming explosion.

All told, seven men died that weekend.

The architecture student was reading about the *"Naples yacht tragedy"* in an English paper as he was returning on the Nice-Zurich bus Monday morning. Hans' mother, on seeing the student told him, "In emptying your wastebasket, I came upon an old street map of Zurich. I can not find it at the moment, I am so upset—that no-good boy of mine is missing again—but the map is around. I thought you might have thrown it out by mistake. I'll find it soon."

The student said, "Don't bother; I did throw it out. Merely a practice street plan I did, as I imagined the Bahnhofstrasse was like years ago. Despite my getting some real parchment paper, the bloody fool of a professor only rated it a 'B.' Thanks, but it's of no use—throw it away when you find it."

Another DEPARTMENT OF LOST STORIES **Masterpiece**

Coming Soon

HELLSGARDE

by C. L. MOORE

Illya and Napoleon

U.N.C.L.E.

(David McCallum)

(Robert Vaughn)

LIFE SIZE PIN-UPS

Personally Autographed

They're the newest, the wildest, the greatest ever . . . New super pin-ups of Illya and Solo. They're lifesize (over 2½x3½ feet). And what's more they are exclusive, no one else has them, not even the fan mags. They're THE OFFICIAL PHOTOS CHOSEN BY THE FAN CLUB. Wait till your friends walk into the room. Won't they flip! THERE IS ILLYA — THERE IS SOLO — lifesize and so real they'll think for a minute both are there.

It's real fab for your bedroom, den, or playroom. It's like nothing you've ever seen before. You'll really be the envy of the crowd. And remember they're personally autographed and they are official.

$1 only each

FREE

Rush your order now and receive FREE your official membership card in the Man from U.N.C.L.E. Fan Club. PLUS your very own U.N.C.L.E. Agent card. So c'mon. Don't Delay.

RUSH BACK THE COUPON NOW!

MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. FAN CLUB, DEPT. 1067
P.O. Box 711, Grand Central Post Office, N.Y., N.Y. 10017

Rush me my pin-ups plus official MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. Fan Club Membership card and U.N.C.L.E. Agent card. I must really flip or I may return everything for a full purchase price refund.

☐ I enclose $1.00 plus 25¢ (to cover shipping charges) for Illya.

☐ Please send me Robert Vaughn also. I enclose an additional $1.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....Zip Code.....

THE SLEEPER

Ten long years he had lived alone with his deadly secret. And suddenly he knew —for a spy, the final pay must be death!

by SHEILA LYNDS

JOEL HUBER knew instantly that the innocent-seeming envelope in his wife's hand was the letter he had been waiting for.

Grace carried it in when she returned from her daily morning safari to school with their oldest boy, Tommy. She glanced curiously at the simple engraved return address.

Huber knew that there was nothing about the address to give it away, and fought down the urge to reach for it at once. To move, take the letter too fast.

"New York," Grace said. "Some publishing company. It must be a new company after you, Joel. I don't remember you ever writing anything for this company."

"Then I'm sure I didn't," Huber said. "Probably some scientific publisher asking me to buy someone else's book."

He made his voice remain calm, neutral. He continued to read his newspaper and sip his coffee, but with a small and polite smile to his wife to show that he was paying attention to the problem of a piece of junk mail.

"I suppose so," Grace said.

She placed the letter on the kitchen table.

Huber did not look at it. A man could not be too careful.

Grace turned her attention to the sink and the dishes. Her back to Huber, she said, "Tommy needs shoes again, Joel. I'm afraid both the girls need dresses, too."

Huber slid the letter into his suit coat pocket.

"Then buy them, my dear," he said.

"I know you don't like to spend money," Grace said. "Not on small necessities anyway."

"I simply like to have money in the bank, Grace," Huber said.

She smiled. "You're a good provider, Joel."

"I try to be. We're not rich, but I like my work."

"I know you do," Grace said.

Huber finished his coffee and folded his paper. He was anxious to get to the office. He would not risk opening the letter, even in his study. He kissed Grace and left the house.

As he walked from the modest ranch-style house he had bought ten years ago, he began to plan. He congratulated himself on how well he had prepared for the moment. The two vacation trips had given him a valid passport; there would be no trouble.

He waited in the cool morning sunlight in front of his house. It was Paul Thatcher's week to drive to town: That was good. Unlike most other mornings, he did not feel annoyed that Thatcher was late as usual. The letter was in his pocket, and now he was above small annoyances.

Huber greeted the sleepy-eyed bachelor with a cheery wave, and climbed into the front seat beside Thatcher. His boss, Ed Ross, and old Kandinsky sat in the rear as usual.

"Fine morning, eh, Ed?" Huber said to his boss.

"Joel is always happy," Thatcher said.

"That's because he doesn't want more than he can have," old Kandinsky said. "Show me a man with big schemes, and I'll show you trouble."

"Guilty, officer!" Thatcher said.

Kandinsky was chief of security at Huber's plant. He had been very useful to Huber in his slow preparations for the day when the time would come—for today!

"You look tired, Paul," Huber said to Thatcher as they drove. "What was it last night? Poker? A woman? A party?"

"As a matter of fact, Joel, it was scheming. Kandinsky is right. I was scheming with a friend to get rich quick."

"I like to know about a man," old Kandinsky said. "It's my job to know."

Huber glanced at Kandinsky. Did the old man know something? But Kandinsky couldn't know anything. There was nothing to know. Not yet. And Huber saw that Kandinsky was smiling. It was only one of the security chief's poor jokes.

Thatcher dropped the three of them at the plant gate. The bachelor drove on toward his office some miles away, and Huber, Ross and Kandinsky checked through the heavy security at the gate of their plant.

Huber and Ross walked across the open parking lot to the design section building and entered through the electronic scanners that exposed any metal a man was carrying—including the trace of

metallic pigment used in the ink for all the top secret drawings and plans.

"Good morning, George," Ed Ross said to the guard who operated the scanner.

"Morning, Mr. Ross, Mr. Huber," George said as he watched his scanner dial. "You're all clean this morning."

"No bombs today," Ed Ross said.

They all laughed, and Huber and Ross went on into the plant.

The corridors of the design section were quiet, air-conditioned and sound-proofed. They seemed like the corridors of any normal office building.

Huber knew better. To anyone else, the heavy security at the gate, the electrified and alarm-wired twelve-foot cyclone fence, the specially coded badges that completely identified each man, and the electronic scanners at the doors of each building, were a complete security system.

Huber knew that this was only the surface. He had helped design the security of the plant, and he was proud of the hidden results. He could always actually feel the secret devices that watched them all as they moved along the corridors. The X-ray units that took pictures at points where men were forced to stand for a moment and wait for doors to be opened from the inside had been his own particular idea.

The special devices that detected any film a man might be carrying had been Kandinsky's design, and a very sophisticated idea. Kandinsky knew his job. Ed Ross, with some help from Huber, had suggested the machines that read a man's badge at unexpected points to be sure that no unauthorized personnel had somehow reached inside the plant.

There were even machines that could tell if a badge were worn by the right man, or if it had been removed and was being worn by an imposter.

Huber took considerable satisfaction in his share of the work that had gone into making it impossible to bring anything dangerous into the plant, or take anything secret out of it. It had been part of his training, and he was proud of his training.

He reached his desk in the large design office, one of the supervisors' desks close to the private office of Ed Ross. He sat down and waited quietly until Ross had gone on into his private office, and until he could see Ross deeply immersed in reading the report of yesterday's work. Then, alone, he opened the letter.

The letter offered to sell him a book on electronic design at a large discount because of his professional status in America's design technology. It seemed simple and innocent. It was neither simple nor innocent.

Huber, unseen, took a piece of cardboard from his desk drawer, and placed it over the letter. There was a small hole in the piece of cardboard. Through the hole one word of the innocent letter could be read: *Now.*

For one brief instant Huber's hand shook. But it was not fear that trembled his hands, it was excitement. It was the release of an incredible tension he had never really know was in him all these years. *Now.* The purpose of his entire life to this point was about to be fulfilled. The time had come.

It was impossible to steal from this plant. But that was what Joel Huber was now going to do.

Joel Huber was a spy.

JOEL HUBER was a trained and professional spy, but one who had never stolen a word, had never spied on anything or anyone until now. For twenty years he had been a professional spy without working one day at his profession.

Huber was a special kind of spy —a *sleeper.*

Now, as he looked at the single word, *Now,* he saw his whole life in an instant.

His childhood in an Eastern European country when his name had not been Huber. His youth at the special school. The moment, fifteen years ago, when he had become Joel Huber. The real Joel Huber had been an orphan with no real home, no family, no public record such as fingerprints on file, and who had made the error of going alone on a European vacation during troubled times. An unknown man who was now quite dead.

He had looked enough like Huber to become, with a surgeon's help, his twin. He had become Joel Huber. Disguised as Huber, he went to America, went to college, took a special degree in electronics design, married Grace, because a man with a good job and normal habits was usually married in America, and had taken the good job in the electronics plant where he still worked.

Ten years in the same plant; three children; the normal house life and promotions; and he *was* Joel Huber. There was no one who knew who he really was; no one who could now. To himself he was Joel Huber—family man; normal American; reliable and simple. The only faint hint of difference was the fact that, despite offers, he had stayed at the same job.

A man above suspicion because he had done nothing to arouse suspicion. More, he had actually shown concern for plant security. A nice touch that, and he smiled as he thought of how he had used his special training to come up with good suggestions for security. While, of course, becoming thoroughly familiar with the security system.

Ten years without action, with-

out any known contact with his true country. A *sleeper*. A spy who does not spy but only waits for the one moment when he will be needed. The moment that had now come.

Each year or so Huber had sent a simple letter to a post office box in New York. A letter that reported, in code, what his plant was working on, and what he might have access to in other plants. Each letter had received no answer. Until now.

His last letter had reported that he was working on a new self-contained missile defense system. The system that would be incorporated into all American missiles to defend against anti-missile attack. Anyone who knew this system could learn how to destroy any American missile in the air.

His country wanted to know the system. This was the project important enough for him to act at last. Huber was ready. He was no longer a sleeper.

He slipped the letter into his desk as his fellow workers began to arrive. They greeted him warmly, and he greeted them. After all, they were his friends and associates of ten years.

"Always the early bird, eh, Joel?" Marcus Dieter said.

Dieter was a former German engineer, a designer of gyro systems. A man of middle age, Dieter had been in Germany during the last war. Huber had been careful with Dieter. The German had had military training, and was accustomed to being suspicious.

"In an orphanage you learn to get up early. Now it's a habit," he said with a smile to Dieter. It was the same answer he had given a hundred times to the same question from Dieter. The German was a man of habit, too.

"Joel is no night owl," young Ujcic said.

Vic Ujcic was the newest member of the team in the guidance system design room. A bachelor and a good designer. Perhaps too good a designer for a man so young. And a bachelor whose comings and goings were unpredictable. Huber had watched Ujcic closely ever since the young man had joined the staff. A new man could always be a counter-agent. So far, Ujcic had

shown no suspicion or evidence of being anything more than he was supposed to be.

"With a wife and three kids, who can be a night owl?" Huber said with a laugh. "Besides, my wife is so worn out with her Great Books, and her bridge club, and the PTA, and her Red Cross work she just collapses at night. You bachelors think marriage is one long orgy. Let me tell you different."

"Amen!"

"Yeh, yeh!"

The married men all echoed Huber's sentiments. Everyone laughed like the good ten-year companions they were.

"You should all be as steady as Joel," Ed Ross said.

The boss called that from his office, and grinned at his staff. The chatter went on quietly and pleasantly. Design work was not the kind of work where men could plunge right in like checking laundry bills. A man had to shift his gears slowly from home and private matters to the demanding brainwork.

Coffee came, and with it the easy talk continued to flow. It was the morning ritual of men who had worked together for years. They were old friends. They played golf together. With their wives they visited each other regularly. A typical office staff in a typical technical company. A little dull, perhaps.

Only Joel Huber knew that one of them was not typical, and not dull.

The talk subsided, the coffee was finished, and they went to work. Each man went to the vault for his work. Each man brought back his work and bent in silence and concentration over his desk. Each man thought only of his work. Except Joel Huber.

Huber worked with the others, but his mind was on a different work. It was Monday, and the job would be done on Friday. He had a week to restudy and firm the plans of ten years. A week to prepare in his mind while his body went about his normal routine.

That night, Monday, he watched television with Grace as he always did on Monday. They ate potato chips, drank beer, and Grace talked.

"I bought the dresses for the girls," Grace said. "The best this town has. You seem distracted, Joel."

"Dresses, good," Huber said. "I like a small town."

Huber thought: the plans for the missile-defense system were in many sections. They were worked on in the Top Secret Section, and no one man worked on more than a part. The complete plans were locked in the vault in the office of the Chief Design Engineer. Huber had no connection to them. But he would get them.

On Friday, and by Monday next he would be back where he had

started fifteen years ago. The theft would be detected, of course, possibly even on Monday, but that was expected. The plans would give his country knowledge it did not have, in one-tenth the time it would take to develop them themselves, and expose and slow-down the Americans for a year or so. Such was the limited goal of modern espionage.

Fifteen years of waiting, one day of action, and a small advantage to his homeland. Then the *sleeper* would be of no more value. That was the advantage of a *sleeper*; there was no need to cover his tracks beyond a few days.

On Tuesday Huber went to his chess club with Dieter and Ed Ross. He won three out of four games, and drew the fourth. He played as well as he always did. On his way home he went to the bus depot and waited in the men's room, as arranged once ten years ago, for the envelope to be given to him over the partition by the man who came through on a bus and stayed in town ten minutes. In the envelope were all his tickets and the route he would take Friday night.

The only regret Huber had was his family. They must be left behind. Perhaps he could bring them over later, if they wanted to come. Grace was a patriotic woman. He would miss the children, yes, but he would leave them provided for, and a man had his work.

On Wednesday he remained at home with the children while Grace went to her regular Great Books lecture. When the children were in bed he packed his attache case and one suitcase. He had his cover story, a meeting with his New York publisher. He had already arranged this, and he had gone on such sudden trips before.

"I have to see Adams in New York on Saturday," he told Grace when she came home from the lecture and her coffee with the girls. "I'm sorry."

"Try to get a bigger advance this time," Grace said.

Thursday night Paul Thatcher and his sister came to play bridge at Huber's house. Huber won all four rubbers. Grace bid the guests good night. Huber was in bed before she came up. Earlier that day he had rented the car and parked it in the special place not far from the plant.

Friday morning he waited for Thatcher as usual. He carried the special attache case with the thin secret compartment lined with special lead sheets. Ed Ross was not with Thatcher, but Kandinsky noted the new attache case.

"Planning to take work home, Huber?" the chief of security said.

"I have to finish a job," Huber said. "I'm not sure if I'll stay late, or bring it home, or both."

"All work and no play," Thatcher said. "You're a strange man, Joel."

Alert, Huber glanced at Thatch-

er. But the bachelor seemed innocent enough.

"Don't stray out of your section," Kandinsky said. "My men are nervous."

Huber was sure it was another of Kandinsky's poor jokes. But it did not hurt to be careful. He would keep alert tonight.

At the plant he passed through all the security without trouble, the lead failing to be detected in his brief case.

As he worked the rest of the day he became nervous. That was only to be expected. Fifteen years ago he had been trained to expect nervousness. He had waited a long time. To keep his mind busy he took careful note of all his fellow workers, especially Dieter and Ujcic. Both men had made a point of being friendly to Huber over the years.

By five o'clock they were all gone except Ed Ross. Huber worked calmly. Ross came to see what he was doing. For one instant Huber almost panicked.

The work he was doing was not really vital. It was not actually necessary that he work late on it.

Had he made a blunder after all these years?

"That's not urgent, Joel," Ross said. "No need for overtime."

Huber thought fast. "The guidance job next week is urgent, Ed. I thought I'd clear the decks."

Ross considered, smiled. "Right as usual."

"I may take some home though. Over the weekend," Huber said.

"I'll tell them at the gate. Give me the document numbers."

Then Ross was gone and the office was empty. Ross would recall the conversation on Monday, but it would be too late then. Time, that was the tool of the sleeper. Time and trust. There was no way to steal the plans undiscovered. But a sleeper, trusted and working inside, would gain, perhaps, two days before discovery. A normal spy might not have those vital days.

Huber opened his bottom desk drawer and removed the false bottom. He took a miniature camera from the drawer. A camera he had brought in piece-by-piece inside other metal objects.

He also took a small, powerful flood lamp, and three keys. Finally, he took out a thin screw-driver-like tool made of specially strong metal—he had made it himself in the plant shop.

It had taken the ten years to slowly prepare these few tools.

He left his desk and walked with the tools to the men's room. Inside he climbed on a sink, removed the air-conditioning duct cover with his tool, and climbed into the duct. He crawled along the duct to the sixth register. He opened this and dropped down.

He stood in a small office. He used the first of his three keys to open the door between this office and the Top Secret Design Room.

He crossed the dark Top Secret Room and used his second key to enter a locked storeroom. Inside the storeroom he locked the door behind him and looked up at the ceiling.

The storeroom was connected by an old ventilation duct to the closet in the office of the Chief Design Engineer. It was the major flaw Huber had discovered five years ago and prepared to use. Now he removed the duct cover, climbed up, crawled the few feet along the duct, and dropped down into the closet.

He carefully opened the closet door and peered out.

The office was empty. He reached the vault in a few quick and silent steps.

It was a large, walk-in vault, air-conditioned and designed for keeping a large number of valuable papers. It was not burglar-proofed or connected to an alarm, since it was in constant use and the company relied on plant security—plus some special measures with the documents themselves.

It opened with keys, not a combination. Each man who used the vault had a key, and the chief design engineer had another. Both keys were needed to open the vault. Huber's third special key was a copy of the chief design engineer's key. He now used it, and his own key, to open the vault.

Inside the vault he located the plans he wanted. He did not worry about fingerprints. The plans themselves were treated with a chemical that would react to the intensity of light needed to take good micro-film copies of them. When he did not appear, it would not take them long to find what he had stolen. It would not take them long to find that the plans had been stolen even if he did return, which is why he would not return.

He photographed the complete plans for the missile-defense, returned the plans, locked the vault, and made his return trip by the same route. He developed the film in the dark room.

In his own office he placed the tiny roll of film inside the lead-lined container. He placed his own work in the attache case. He returned all his tools to the secret compartment in his desk drawer. Then he left the office.

As he walked along the corridors he could sense the devices studying him. He had the proper badge. The X-Ray films would show the drawings he was taking home. The film detector should be defeated by the lead-lined compartment.

At the door he heard the scanner react to the metal ink on his drawings. He smiled at George the guard.

"Caught," he said.

"Red-handed, Mr. Huber," George said.

The guard took his attache case, opened it, and inspected the drawings. They were all assigned to Hu-

ber, and Ross had left word. George did not inspect the attache case closely.

"Don't work too hard tonight," George said.

Huber smiled. He walked out of the building and across the parking lot to the gate. The guard on the gate was waiting for him. It was routine for George at the door of the building to call the gate, in case anyone tried to sneak around inside the plant grounds.

The guard on the gate inspected his attache case, checked his badge, and took the badge. Huber passed through. He walked to the bus stop as he had done a hundred times in the ten years when he worked late. The bus came and he got aboard.

The bus turned the corner and Huber got off at the next stop. He walked to where his hired car was hidden. He drove to the bus depot. There he placed the tiny roll of film in a coin-locker. He took the key and walked out and back toward the bus stop. He left his hired car in the parking lot of the bus depot. No one would notice it for days.

He stopped at an empty lot on his way to the bus stop, looked around, and dropped the key into a hole he had dug there days ago. Then he went on and caught the bus home—a bus no more than one later than he should have been on.

He left the bus at his corner and walked slowly up the curving tract street in the last twilight of the summer night. In a way he felt a little sad. It was the last time he would walk this street. After ten years he had come to like it. But a man had his duty in this world.

In a few days he would be walking the streets of his native country—after fifteen years. He felt both sad and excited. He would go home a hero, a success. Still, he had not even spoken the language in fifteen years, and it would be strange at first.

He turned up his walk—and came alert.

Huber blinked. There was something strange. For a moment he almost panicked again. Then he got a grip on himself. Nothing could be wrong. Even if they had accidentally discovered that the plans had been tampered with, there was no reason to suspect him. Not until he failed to return on Monday.

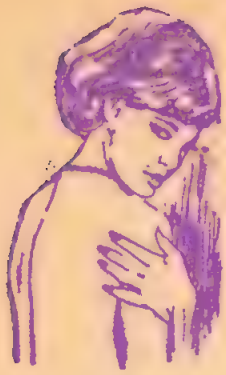
But . . . and then Huber almost laughed. What was wrong was simply the silence of his house. His car was in the garage as it should have been, but there was no noise. The children were not at home. He opened the door and went in. He heard Grace in the kitchen. He called his normal nightly greeting.

"I'm home, dear."

"You're late," Grace called back.

"Sorry, work," he said.

He went into his study and put away the special attache case. He brought out his other attache case, an exact copy without the hidden



features. Then he went upstairs and got his single suitcase, and brought it down, and put it neatly at the front door beside the attache case. He went into the kitchen.

"I have to get the nine o'clock bus to the city."

"Do you have time for dinner?"

"Of course," he said. "The nine o'clock bus will catch the night jet for New York."

He did not add that the night jet for New York would enable him to catch the morning jet for Paris, and that the morning jet for Paris would meet the jet for Berlin. Once in Berlin he would simply walk across into the Eastern Sector. He had all the proper papers.

"Then sit down, dear. I'm just ready," Grace said. "I know how you hate to rush."

Huber sat down with a smile to his wife. "Where are the children?"

He asked casually. It was unusual for the children not to be home at this hour.

"The girls wanted to stay at their friend Miriam's for dinner," Grace said. "Tommy asked to go to the Boy Scouts early, so I let him go. Did you want them, Joel?"

"No," he said quickly.

He would have liked to have seen the children once more, but perhaps it was for the best. He had always been most worried about leaving the children, about his strength to leave them. Of course, he hoped that they would decide, in the end, to join him in his own country. At least the children. After all, they were his children. He was a patriot of his true country. They should be proud of him someday.

By an effort of concentration, he put the children out of his mind and ate his dinner as if this were a day like any other day. He did not look at the clock once, but he was acutely aware of the time. He could feel himself growing nervous now that it was almost over. He knew that that was natural. He had been warned about the last-minute nerves often enough in the special school so long ago. Once on the jet he did not think that he could be stopped, and—

The ring of the telephone dried the thought in his mind.

Huber froze, became stone.

Grace stood up. "That'll be Lucy, dear. I asked her to call about the next lecture. We may take a field trip. You finish your coffee."

Huber felt the tension drain slowly. He listened to the distant

voice of his wife in the living room. There was a giggle. He smiled. She had been a good wife. In a way, he realized, he had come to like American women better than the women of his own country. Except for their telephone habits. He smiled again, listened.

Then he frowned at himself. There was a danger to being too sure, too casual. More spies had failed from a fear of making a change in plan than from making the change. They could not have found out yet. It was not possible. The plans would not be checked until Monday. Still . . .

Huber finished his coffee, to be ready the instant Grace returned. Anticipation of trouble was the mark of a good agent. He would leave now, at once. He would take no chances. Instead of the bus he would hire a car and drive to the city. He could make some excuse to Grace, have her drive him to the bus station, and then take a car.

Yes, the sooner he was on the jet the better. Perhaps he could get a cancellation on an earlier flight. From New York he could try to take a jet to some other city than Paris, just in case.

Grace returned. Huber wiped his mouth, smiled, began to tell her of his change of plan.

Then he saw her eyes.

They were strange eyes. Eyes that looked down at him where he sat at the table in the seat he had been in at dinner for ten years, and seemed to be seeing a man they had never seen. There was anger in the eyes, and a certain triumph.

"Grace?" Huber said. His voice, the sound of his voice, was a question.

She blinked. "Did you know that you talk in your sleep, Joel? Not often. I mean a few times? Once or twice?"

"Talk in my sleep?" Huber said, echoed.

"I think it only happens under strong emotion," Grace said as if thinking about it. "The first time I heard you was the night I brought Tommy home from the hospital. We'd only been married just over a year, I remember. I loved you very much. I was so proud of my brilliant husband."

"Talked?" Huber said. "In my sleep?"

He felt like a stupid parrot, repeating meaningless phrases. But there was nothing else he could think of to say at the instant. It did not matter. Grace seemed lost in her own distant thoughts.

Grace's eyes watched the distance. "You never used your brilliance, did you? You preferred to stay in this town, in that steady job at the plant. I sometimes wondered why. I mean, most men would have taken some of those other offers. They would have advanced your career. Or what was supposed to be your career. I'm surprised the company never wondered."

"Wondered?" Huber said. "What

did I say? When I talked in my sleep, Grace! What did I say?"

Grace shook her head. "I don't know, dear. I mean, I never knew exactly what you said. Not the words."

Huber felt a wave of relief. "Well then, I—"

"Not the words," Grace went on. "They were foreign, you know? I mean, you talked in some strange language. Some Eastern European language, Slavic. You know, Russian, or Polish, or Bulgarian, or something like that. That was awfully strange, you know?"

Huber's stomach dropped somewhere far below the floor. He tried to speak, but no words would come out.

Grace frowned. "It was very strange. I mean, how did Joel Huber know such a language? You're not even of Slavic descent, Joel. You're not supposed to be, are you?"

"Grace," Huber said, "Listen to me. I—"

"No, Joel," Grace said. "Don't try. It's much too late. You talked more than once. I began to wonder. I made a very close check into Joel Huber's background. He couldn't have known that language. Then there was that trip to Europe. Then there were those letters you wrote, to that New York box number. You never got an answer, did you? Not until Monday. I saw how excited you were by that letter on Monday. I knew it was the time."

Huber was sweating now. "Grace, listen! I'll tell you . . ."

She did not hear. "Ten years, Joel. All the time you were someone else. All that time you planned to leave us! Before you married me you planned to leave me. It could have been twenty years, I suppose, or a year! I was nothing! I was just *cover*. The children were just *cover*! We didn't count at all. Your job was that important."

"Grace, you don't understand. I had my work. But I was going to send for you all when I got home. I—"

"Home?" Grace said. "This is my home, Joel. I'm an American, you know?"

"Grace, please . . ." Huber said desperately.

"At first I was stunned," she said. "I didn't believe it. Then I was angry, I was going to expose you and leave you. Nine years ago I was going to leave you. In a way I wish I had."

There was a silence. Huber felt the sweat dripping inside his shirt. But his mouth was as dry as a desert.

"At first?" he said. "Why didn't you leave me?"

Grace sighed. "They didn't want me to. They said it would be better if I waited until you—made your move. I never thought it would be nine years."

"They?" Huber said, and his voice was not a voice but a dry croak of sudden fear.

Before she could answer Huber heard the cars screech to a half outside the house. Two or three cars that came up fast. Voices shouted. Huber started for the rear door.

"No, Joel," Grace said sharply. "Don't try. It's the FBI, and the police, too. They'll kill you if you try to run."

Huber stopped. Looked at her. "That phone call."

"They've been watching you, dear. They saw everything you did. They've been watching you for almost eight years. Ever since I went to them and told them about you talking in your sleep. The call told me they had found all you did tonight."

"Eight years?" Huber said, stared at his wife.

"Yes, Joel. You see, I had a job to do too, didn't I? This is my country, Joel, and—" She stopped, smiled. "By the way, dear, what is your name? I feel silly calling you Joel now."

Huber only stared. Moments later they were all around him. They took him away to the city. They had the film. They locked him up.

Back in the small house where she had lived ten years with Joel Huber, Grace Huber sat alone. An hour after they had taken Huber away, there was a knock on the door and Paul Thatcher walked into the living room. He looked down at Grace.

"We owe you our thanks, Mrs. Huber," Thatcher said. "Thanks to you we were ready for him."

"Yes," she said. "You had a long wait."

"It was worth it, Mrs. Huber," Thatcher said. "If we had picked him up eight years ago they would only have sent someone we didn't know. This way we lulled them into false security for eight years, and stopped him cold when he finally moved. It's a small victory, but every victory helps."

"The FBI has a hard job," Grace said. "You must have grown tired of it, too."

"I do my job," FBI man Thatcher said.

Grace nodded. "Yes. You did your job, and Joel did his job." And she looked up at Thatcher. "And I did my job, too, didn't I?"

"No counter-agent could have done it except you, Mrs. Huber," he said.

Grace Huber nodded slowly again. "A counter-agent. I suppose that's what I was. Imagine."

Suddenly the house seemed very lonely.

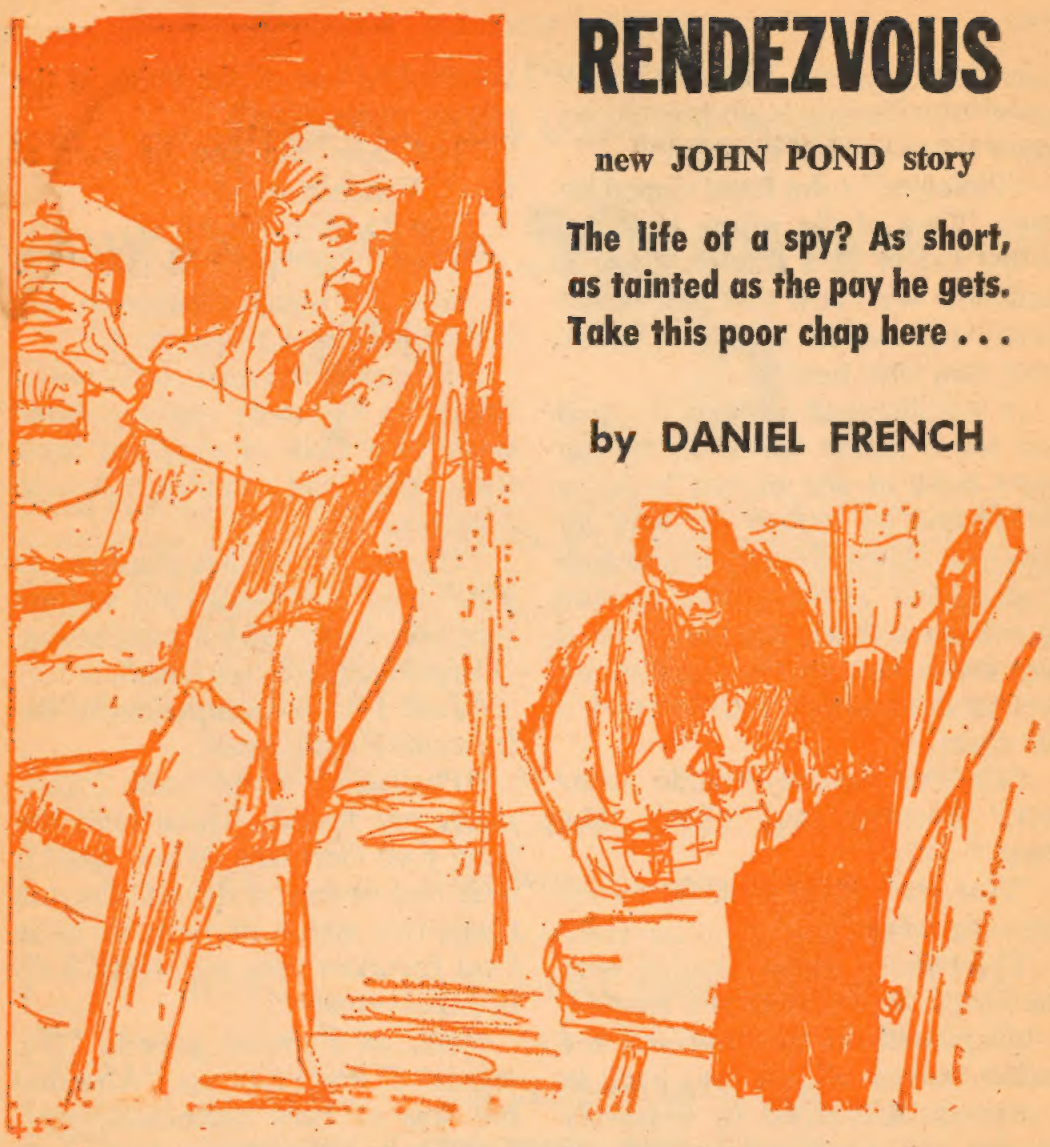
ALWAYS A NEW COMPLETE SOLO AND KURYAKIN NOVEL EVERY ISSUE

RENDEZVOUS

new JOHN POND story

The life of a spy? As short, as tainted as the pay he gets. Take this poor chap here . . .

by DANIEL FRENCH



THE FASHIONABLE beer *garten* in Munich was crowded and noisy. John Pond and Arnold Fancher of the U.S. Embassy occupied a table from which they had a clear view of the two quietly-dressed men apparently enjoying the crowd and each his stein of beer.

"Yes," Fancher said, "those two are East Germans smuggled in to make contact. John, if they get their hands on the information, they'll be over the wall faster than we can follow them."

"If they leave this beer *garten*," Pond said.

"All right, we know they were sent here to make contact with a spy who will turn over some impor-

tant information. But we don't know who the spy is, so how do we know when contact is made?"

"Patience!" John Pond sipped his beer. "One of the prime elements in the career of a foreign agent is patience. We know that pair hasn't been approached so far. They've only had one beer."

A middle-aged woman dragged her purse across the back of one spy's head as she moved between tables and he looked up with an annoyed frown. Shortly afterwards a dandified boulevardier seemed to recognize them, but they shooed him away. One of the spies raised his hand to signal the waiter for the check.

"They've already made contact," Fancher said. "Let's take them."

"Not yet," Pond said. "Remember—patience."

The elderly waiter handed over the check. It was dutifully studied, a bill placed on the tray and the waiter moved off. He was back in a moment and stood by hopefully for his tip. One spy studied the change in coins, scooped it all up and placed a bill on the tray. The spies arose and headed for the door.

John Pond signaled covertly. Three men arose and intercepted the spies very quietly.

John Pond said, "Let's pick up the waiter, Mr. Fancher. He's the one who passed the information, probably in the form of a microdot adhered to one of the coins in the change on the tray."

"But how can you be sure of that?" Fancher asked.

John Pond smiled grimly.

"First things first," he said. "Let us hear the man's confession. He is the right one. I guarantee it."

Later, after the man confessed—which he did most readily—Pond sat over a stein of excellent lager with the still fuming Arnold Fancher.

"It's the little things you have to watch for," Pond said, not without a certain degree of self satisfaction. "Consider the bill, my friend."

"Bill? I do not comprehend," the frowning Fancher said.

"Precisely," Pond said. "Consider, my friend. These men are from East Germany. Where food is dear and money is dearer. Do you think two steins of beer to these God forsaken men are worth a tip of paper money?"

And, as Fancher gaped: "No, my man," Pond went on. "Also that bill was of very respectable size. Too big to tip a waiter. Just about big enough to pay for illegal information. Simple, isn't it, when you think it over?"

Fancher sighed. "Sometimes you can be most irritating, John. But more often than not you have a right to be. You are right, of course. Let us drink to it. And tip in small coins."

They finished their drink in appreciative silence.

You May Have Missed
These Ten 1966 U.N.C.L.E. Novels

NOW AVAILABLE at 50c FOR EACH COPY

Have you read all issues of THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE? If so, congratulations. Robert Hart Davis' brilliant spy-adventure novels have been the year's reading sensation. If you have missed any or all of them, ten issues, March to December, are still available. (The February issue is completely out of stock.) These back copies will be sold on a completely first-come first-served basis, at 50¢ a single-copy. If you want one or all of the year's most talked about reading treat, get your copies without delay. You will be glad.

☐	MARCH	**THE BEAUTY AND BEAST AFFAIR**
☐	APRIL	**THE UNSPEAKABLE AFFAIR**
☐	MAY	**THE WORLD'S END AFFAIR**
☐	JUNE	**THE VANISHING ACT AFFAIR**
☐	JULY	**THE GHOST RIDERS AFFAIR**
☐	AUGUST	**THE CAT AND MOUSE AFFAIR**
☐	SEPTEMBER ..	**THE BRAINWASH AFFAIR**
☐	OCTOBER	**THE MOBY DICK AFFAIR**
☐	NOVEMBER ...	**THE THRUSH FROM THRUSH AFFAIR**
☐	DECEMBER ...	**THE GOLIATH AFFAIR**

LEO MARGULIES CORP.
56 West 45th Street, New York, New York. 10036

Please send me the back copies of **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. MAGAZINE** checked off in small boxes above; next to stories desired. I enclose 50¢ for each issue in full payment.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print **October—67**